Lutheran Mission Matters

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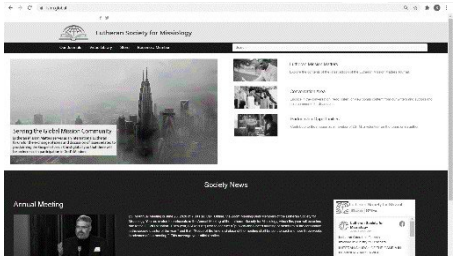

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Inside This Issue

Theological Education for Pastoral-Missional Leadership

Pastoral formation and theological education remain crucial issues for almost all church bodies. It has always been so, but the dramatic decline in seminary enrollment corresponds to a similar decline in church membership and attendance.[1] What is important to the mission focus of this journal is the fact that many of the same social, cultural, religious, and economic factors that are affecting the institutional church structures in decline are also opening up a vast mission field, filled with opportunities and challenges.

Many of these challenges present themselves in a much different cultural context and religious milieu than just a generation ago. Polls confirm, at least for the Western world, an increasingly unchurched society dominated by the rise of either the "nones," who have religious inclinations but little interest in traditional institutions, or true unbelievers, many of whom are unaware and even hostile to the church's message. For many congregations, this is no longer simply a matter of bringing in the church seekers or even the "churched" from other denominations, moved by the Holy Spirit to grasp the strength of biblical doctrine as understood by the Lutheran Confessions. It is much more a matter of presenting the fundamental realities and divine truths of Law and Gospel to a culture that barely cares to understand the notion of "god."

On the other hand, much of the non-Western world, particularly the global South, is experiencing some spiritual revival. Several Lutheran churches are thriving, and countries that those in the West once thought of as mission fields are sending missionaries, evangelists, and ordained pastors into our communities. Some of them have been formed in ways quite different from our traditional models yet display an urgency and skill in witness and outreach that may often be lacking in those who are formed within the presumed "gold standard" of a formal Master of Divinity degree.

So, not only could the challenges of enrollment be addressed in new ways, but even the substance and focus of seminary education may need to be evaluated and, if helpful, reshaped as needed. The theological foundation and biblical and Confessional substance dare never change, but the context in and for which seminary education forms pastors may need to be reframed. Additionally necessary is the multiplication of new methods, especially new means and modes of delivering education, all of which can be tried and tested and put to appropriate service. All of this underscores the theme of this issue of *Lutheran Mission Matters,* "Theological Education for Pastoral-Missional Leadership."

The focus is on *pastoral* formation. That is not to ignore the actual end goal of pastoral ministry, which is to empower the entire people of God to *be* the people of God, not just within the safer space of Christian fellowship, where they are strengthened by God's gifts, but also to engage the world outside—even just outside—our doors with the saving message of God's gift of true life and salvation through Jesus the Christ. But at the heart of that mission are the Means of Grace and the pastoral office entrusted with stewardship of those means.

In fact, this end goal gives focus to the second aspect of this theme, pastoral-*missional* leadership. The hyphen is intentional. The editorial committee wanted to highlight that this is a tandem pair, not simply a series of otherwise independent adjectives that a comma might suggest ("pastoral, missional . . ."). We intend to suggest that "pastoral" leadership includes "mission" leadership appropriate to the context of today's church together with our Savior's own end goal as the true Son of Man to embody the new creation under His grace-full lordship, where all authority is given to Him, and then, receiving the first fruits of that new life, for His followers to make disciples, yes, of all nations.

So what—and how—are we doing in our current pastoral formation to meet the mission needs of today's world? How are the current curricula, surrounded by all the factors of formation that are not measured by credit hours or exams, actually functioning to prepare pastors for mission leadership in current mission contexts? Are we meeting today's challenges, and, if not, are we considering changes that might be tested and proven helpful? The essays offered here are provided as humble contributions toward investigating and answering such questions. This is an ongoing journey, entrusted to various entities in the church, which, in turn, are surrounded by a continuing conversation that must engage the whole church. Among these essays are various analyses of what is happening in pastoral formation and how well it engages these mission challenges. Others offer critiques that question not only current practices but also some of their underlying assumptions and foundations. Some attest to the positive results of new means and modes. The attentive reader will be able to trace some common threads throughout all these essays. At the same time, a good deal of disagreement and even interrelated criticism and correction can be tracked. This is all much intended in the interest of healthy discussion and debate, as iron sharpens iron (Prov 27:17).

Few people read a journal like this from beginning to end, in either a comprehensive or serial manner. When editors respond to the content that a call for papers elicits, anything more than a random selection is usually more accidental than can be credited to good planning. But the essays that follow offer a wholesome and varied spectrum of perspectives and viewpoints. The reader can also track a logical progression through them from start to finish. After several introductory essays that offer an overview of our topic, a second section focuses on what might be summarized as "current practices." This is followed by a final section dealing with "current

possibilities," most notably some experimentation and evaluation of distance learning and other variations on traditional and residential models.

A. Introduction and Overview.

We begin with words of encouragement and a mission challenge to one recent class of seminary graduates, the class of 2022 at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO. These words helped foster and shape this entire issue of *LMM*, as several members of the editorial committee were in the audience as it was given by Dr. Patrick Ferry, retiring president of Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor, at Commencement Exercises last May (2022). As a lifelong runner, Dr. Ferry used the phrase, "ready, set, GO," with the reminder that our Lord's mission in today's world calls us to *go*—out of the usual comfort zones, especially in a church culture that can easily become inwardly rather outwardly focused. Due to the typical formalities and constraints of such a setting, his address spoke in general ways, and the decision was quickly made to follow up with some interview questions to help clarify, expand, and flesh out the details and specifics of his important words.

Then, Dr. Richard Carter, now in "retirement" from a lifetime of service in pastoral and educational ministry (though he has recently returned with missionary and life partner Miriam from mission service as a theological educator at Concordia Theological Seminary in Hong Kong) sets the table in an exercise of thinking seriously about what we understand by "theological education." He invites us to reflect on our understandings of both "education" and "theological," especially in light of biblical models and Lutheran theological accents, all seasoned with a personal and intellectual humility.

B. Current Practices

Dr. James Baneck, Executive Director of the LCMS Office of Pastoral Education, begins with a foundational presentation of the biblical and Confessional principles that underlie pastoral formation in preparation for today's mission challenges. He reminds us of the breadth and depth of such formation and of the role and responsibility of the entire church in raising up the next generation of pastoral leadership.

This is followed by a survey of current practices along with some observations gleaned from conversations with various leaders of four North American seminaries as summarized by your guest editor, who adds some personal reflections and comments from his own experiences in seminary administration and synodical service.

Moving outside of North America, two insightful essays provide perspectives about the *missio dei* in a worldwide context, first "under the southern cross" as presented by Dr. Acir Raymann, recently retired after many years of service as professor and academic dean at Seminário Concórdia, the seminary of Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brazil. Then, Dr. Christu Das, Principal of Concordia

Theological Seminary of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church, offers his insights into the work of another church where the seeds of missionaries have led to the seedbeds that are locally owned and operated seminaries. Both colleagues trace the interesting histories of these seminaries, discuss how they have come to be what they are, and how they are facing the challenges within their own current mission contexts.

C. Challenges, Changes, Current Possibilities

This section begins with a critique of residential education that reflects the significant discussion that has taken place over the past fifty-plus years. Dr. William Utech's analysis is further supported by his own background and life experience, which involves time as a parish pastor, seminary faculty member, and district mission executive. His essay evaluates the "end" or goal of seminary education against the realities of congregational life in our current mission context. He concludes, negatively, that residential education has certain weaknesses along with the usually recognized strengths, and, positively, with some personal "sanctified suggestions" for reflection and consideration.

Dr. Douglas Rutt, himself a missionary, seminary professor, executive director of the international division of Lutheran Hour Ministries, and, most recently, retired provost of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, offers his careful and fair-minded analysis of the strengths and weaknesses, pros and cons of distance education. His conclusion assumes that such new models are here to stay and that they can and will find their helpful and useful place when utilized in a responsible and effective manner. God's church should make use of all modes and means for raising up pastors and mission leaders.

What follows are two collections of experiential anecdotes from students who have engaged in two new models of theological education, and who are already employing that education in mission contexts in North America. The first comes from Dr. Glenn Fluegge, director of the Cross-cultural Ministry Center at Concordia University Irvine, who provides a short description of the center's work and then presents the personal reflections provided by two recent graduates of that program. They share the challenges of their current ministries and how their time in the program helped prepare them for the mission contexts in which they now find themselves.

Secondly, Dr. James Marriott reflects on his experiences as a regular instructor in the Specific Ministry Pastor Program of the LCMS. This program was approved at the 2007 convention of the LCMS with goals that included "an increase in pastoral ministry to meet such needs of the church, especially in light of the mission challenges of today's world."[2] With an overview of the program as conducted by Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, from director Dr. Mart Thompson, Marriott documents responses from four recent participants in that program, each of whom is engaged in a unique missional context. Both of these contributions give a window into how creative and responsible new programs can serve the formation of pastoral-missional leaders.

Three book reviews round out this issue, one by Miriam Carter, on *WE ARE NOT THE HERO, A Missionary's Guide for Sharing Christ, Not a Culture of Dependency* by Jean Johnson. The book deals with the challenges of cross-cultural missionary work that seeks to understand the culture into which one shares the message of God's love in Jesus to people without losing their culture in order to worship God. This study is truly sensitive to the needs for indigenous theological responses and to avoid developing dependencies.

Daniel Mattson reviews *Teaching and Learning Theology in the Online Environment* by Matthew C. Ogilvie. This study discusses the advantages and disadvantages of both residential and distance education and notes the needs for both models, especially in light of different learning styles and personal characteristics and circumstances. Noting that the need for ministry is not negotiable but that the means of preparing pastors *is,* Mattson commends this book as a helpful appraisal and tool for making use of surrounding resources and opportunities.

Finally, I provide an "extended bibliographic notice" on a book from 1975 that has very significant implications for mission conversations even today. Based on extensive research and analysis, Herbert Zorn's *Viability in Context, The Theological Seminary in the Third World—Seedbed or Sheltered Garden?* presents an understanding of the cultural and financial realities of exporting models and means of theological education that are still needed to counter the lingering problems of colonialization and financial dependencies. While providing a summary of some of the important research, I call attention to the more comprehensive review already published in the predecessor to this journal, *Missio Apostolica,* in 2015.

As stated, this issue is intended to provide perspectives and various positions toward the ongoing conversations that take place in congregations, conferences, and even conventions. This discussion must continue, and it must be informed by all the various stakeholders across the church. Our hope as those responsible for making these essays available is that they will serve as a modest contribution to such a common cause of raising up pastoral-missional leaders for today's mission context.

Andrew H. Bartelt
guest editor

ENDNOTES

[1] I do not know if this statistic exists, but I suspect there is a somewhat constant ratio of denominational membership to seminary enrollment, although that would be affected also by the age of a denomination, as the pool of potential seminary students interested in pastoral ministry is likely dependent on the number of young men who are confirmed and entering the recruitment years.

[2] "Resolution 5-01B," *2007 Convention Proceedings*, 63rd Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church Missouri—Synod, Houston, TX, July 14–19, 2007 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), 136, 5th "whereas" statement. "Such needs" refers back to the previous "Whereas" statements that include the need to "provide ordained pastoral service to congregations that cannot support a full-time pastor, ordained pastoral service to contexts where English is not spoken, ordained missionary personnel where finances and/or conditions do not permit calling a full-time missionary" and "needs for providing pastoral ministry in specific and specialized situations where a traditionally prepared seminary candidate or pastor is not available continue to multiply." The following "whereas" notes that "our Synod has resolved to plant 2,000 new congregations by 2017, for which a net gain of 2,000 pastors will be needed."

Articles

Here We Stand; Here We Go!

Patrick T. Ferry

Abstract

In this commencement address delivered at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, on May 20, 2022,[1] Rev. Dr. Patrick Ferry compares the preparation at seminary to the foundation of our faith that Paul speaks about in Romans 5:1–2. He uses the analogy of preparing to run a race, by which we are "on our marks" and have been securely "set." But now it's time to "go!" He calls on seminary graduates—and all the church—to go, to go forward, to go forward into the mission field of today's world.

Members of the Board of Regents, esteemed President Egger, distinguished faculty, honored guests, beloved family and friends, and especially to you graduates of this wonderful seminary, good evening! Congratulations, graduates, as you receive your degree from this remarkable institution whose reputation and recognition has few peers and is known, as it is, near and far for such excellence in theological education, spiritual formation, and vocational preparation. I commend you, and it is a singular privilege for me to be here and part of this auspicious occasion. Thank you.

Thanks, too, for the honor conferred upon me this day.[2] I heard it told that one of my much-loved predecessors at Concordia Milwaukee, the bow-tied and buoyant Walter Stuenkel, received an honorary doctorate from the seminary around the same time that he completed his PhD at Marquette University. He noted that the degree from the Jesuit institution was awarded on the basis of his good works, while the one from the Lutheran institution was pure grace. Now I know how he felt—undeserving but truly grateful. I am humbled by your generous gesture.

Now, you are probably aware that I have been to a few commencements through the twenty-four years that I served as president of Concordia University Wisconsin and later also including Ann Arbor (one more year than Walter Stuenkel was "Prexy"

Pat Ferry is President Emeritus of Concordia University Wisconsin and Concordia University Ann Arbor. He received his M.Div. from Concordia Theological Seminary (Fort Wayne) and his Ph.D. in History from the University of Colorado. He served in pastoral ministry and university teaching before being elected president of Concordia University Wisconsin. His academic background is in the history of Confessional Lutheranism in the later Reformation, and he has been published extensively on preaching and confessional Lutheran theology.

at Concordia Milwaukee, but who is counting?). In any event, quite long enough to harbor no delusions regarding the role that I play in this event. If pressed, I could probably name many of the speakers and maybe recall snatches of one commencement address or another, but not much. However, I do remember the opening remarks of my boyhood hero, the legendary Henry Aaron, when he addressed our graduates at Concordia Wisconsin in 2008. "Hammering" Hank Aaron was an icon in Milwaukee, having played for the Braves and helping Milwaukee to its only World Series championship in 1957 and then finishing his career as a player with the Milwaukee Brewers. His statue stands outside the Brewers' American Family Field. His glory years were behind him when Hank Aaron came to our campus as an old man.

He told us this story of two old men, two old friends, sitting quietly on a park bench together as they often did. After a period of some silence, one rather sheepishly turned to the other and said, "I am so sorry, and I am embarrassed to ask, but would you please remind me? What is your name?" The other turned toward his friend, looked him in the eye, and after another rather long pause replied, "How soon do you need to know?" So, I won't feel bad if you forget me or what I say; we will still be friends—even if you are St. Louis Cardinals fans.

My theme for what follows is based on Romans 5:1–2, and I have titled this commencement message, "Here We Stand, Here We Go." Saint Paul writes, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God" (NIV).

"On your marks." The principle marks of the Church according to *Augustana* Article VII: "The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered." "Get set." Concerning Saint Peter's confession of faith, Jesus said, " . . . on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18). We are set on the Church's one and only rock-solid foundation—Jesus Christ, our Lord. We are on our marks. We are set.

On your marks, graduates—the incomparable Gospel treasure, the present and eternal promise of God's unchanging and unfailing love for each one of us, still dripping with baptismal blessing, still satisfying our deepest hunger and thirst in, with, and under bread and wine, still ringing in our ears and touching our hearts through the sharing of the powerful Word drawing us over and again to the Word made flesh. He is the One who was crucified in that flesh at Calvary, raised in that flesh on the third day so that with Job we say, "I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. After my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him . . . How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:25–27, NIV).

Get set, graduates. We are all set because "neither life nor death, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:38–39). Nothing. Never. Ever. "I know [my sheep]," says the Good Shepherd, "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch

them out of my hand" (Jn 10:27–29). No one. Never. Ever. On your marks, graduates. Get set, graduates. And now what?

Here we stand? This is truly a special evening, and it is quite a thrill for me to be here with you. It is not every day that you get to do something like this. Here in the lovely quad, on this iconic campus, just a stone's throw away from that statue of Martin Luther (not that anybody here would want to throw a stone at the statue)—this is a moment to savor. As a Lutheran for nearly four decades (confirmed following my freshman year in college in 1978), as a Lutheran pastor for almost three decades (ordained in March, 1988), as a Reformation historian and Lutheran university professor for thirty years, including almost a quarter century as a Lutheran university president; the legacy of Luther and the history and heritage of our Lutheran faith does matter a whole lot to me. Obviously, it means a lot to all of you, too. Together, we celebrate our history and heritage. History, and Reformation history in particular, is great stuff! Indeed, it is perfectly fine for us to stand here for a while and look back, ponder, savor.

Graduates, you have received a first-rate theological education from a truly world-class seminary faculty. I am sure that you appreciate this already, and I am certain that you will continue to reflect with gratitude as time goes by. Together, looking back over our shoulders, we realize that we stand on the strong and broad shoulders of giants as we hearken to the still-resonant echo of their resolute voices. Women and men who, like Luther—who stood before the most powerful ruler of his day, the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, at the Diet of Worms, yet would not flinch or compromise his confession of the Gospel truth: "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise!" Especially in this day and age, this time and place, when our Christian faith and religious freedoms are so often undermined and threatened by an inimical and antithetical culture and post-Christian world, we must show some spine and stand straight and tall and prove true when tried about what we believe, teach, and confess. Yes, do stand! And here we stand—on our marks—the pure, powerful Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Here we stand, all set—the unshakable promise of Jesus never to leave or forsake us. Never. Ever. By all means, stand! But, don't just stand all statuesque—on your marks, and get set to *go*!

I started running for exercise over thirty-five years ago when Tammy and I began dating. She was a runner. I had to chase her in order to court her. Now I run every day and have done so for nearly ten years. A few days off three years ago when I was hospitalized with a bad flu has been the only exception to this practice. Last October I ran the Chicago Marathon. It was not my best race. A niggling hamstring is my excuse. After that race I ran a few more half marathons—Nashville in November, San Antonio in December, and Austin in January when I should have been resting a little and nursing my hamstring. Suddenly, the hamstring problem became doubly difficult when my previously fine left one became worse than the right one. Overcompensation. Still, I persisted with the streak. A friend of mine suggested that if I wanted to keep my daily practice in play, I might try running backwards—easier on my backsides. I tried it—once. I am not sure if the hamstrings hurt any less, but I can tell you everything else hurt a lot more!

Hamstrung! On your marks, get set . . . Can you imagine what would happen if nothing came next, if all that we ever did was just stand in place like a statue? We could boast to one another about our great training. We could revel among others about our readiness for come what may. We could stand on our record and previous results. But, "on our marks" and "all set" is merely the prelude to the best part. Perhaps the hardest part—nobody promised it would be easy. Maybe the riskiest part—lots of potholes and possible problems ahead. Whether hard or risky, when you are on your marks, and you are set, it is time to go.

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God" (Rom 5:1-2, NIV).

The evangelical inspiration for Martin Luther from passages like this one changed his life and, indeed, changed the world. Summarized succinctly, the Gospel message from this passage of Saint Paul as you stand at this milestone moment (Is it a finish line? A starting line? Yes!), the message as you prepare to "commence," is rather simple: "Relax!" There is more than enough in this verse to allow us to relax as we "run with perseverance the race marked out for us," as Hebrews describes our journey (Heb 12:1, NIV). Learning to relax even as we run our race is the aim of our text.

We are justified by faith in the saving work of Jesus. Relax! He has taken care of everything already. His burden is light, His yoke is easy. Your salvation and the assurance of your eternal life is not up for grabs. Nothing is left to doubt. Relax! Come, all who are weak and heavy laden, and He will give you rest. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Breathe easy! God's love for you is not open to any question. Exhale! There are no strings attached. The light trouble of this moment, whatever it may be, is preparing us for an everlasting weight of glory. Calm yourself! Through Jesus's blood and merit we now stand before the throne, not of Charles V, the mere Holy Roman Emperor, but of the holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, without sin or fault or blemish or blame and with complete open, unfettered access to Him. By grace through faith, we have peace; we have hope. We need to learn to relax even as we run. But, run we must, and it is time to move forward—go time!

Here we stand—on the shoulders of others, but on our marks of Word and Sacrament and set upon the promises of God, the Church of our time and place cannot, must not, merely stand in place, or worse, just look backward. For such a time as this we are called to "go" forward.

If we are honest, we have to admit that this is not easy for us. A church like ours, rooted as we are in our confessional identity, mindful of the struggles we have endured to preserve as well as proclaim the truth, justifiably proud of our tradition and heritage, wary of fads and gimmicks—a church like ours will not only stand on the shoulders of others, but we are also apt constantly to be looking back over our shoulder as we run our own race. In other words, forward is not our forte.

You don't have to know much about running to be aware that looking back over your shoulder is usually a detrimental strategy. Even worse, imagine trying to go forward by going backward. Hamstrung! Consider this: Once, I competed in a

marathon in which another athlete ran the entire 26.2 miles backward. He had only a little mirror attached to his glasses to give him indication of where he was heading. Crazy, right? That got me thinking, and I discovered that the record fastest time for completing a full marathon while running backward is 3:38:27, about 8:30 per mile. That is not too shabby, and I was surprised by his quick pace. What didn't surprise me, however, is that the runner, Markus Jurgens, set the record in Hannover in his native Germany. I am guessing that Jurgens was not only German but also Lutheran because German Lutherans are astonishingly agile and demonstrate defying degrees of dexterity moving forward while constantly looking back. Imagine what he might have managed barreling forward without constantly looking over his shoulder. Imagine what the future might hold for us if while honoring the past we avoid being hamstrung by the past. Yes, this from an historian—of *Reformationsgeschichte*, no less. On your marks, get set, go! Run relaxed—but go forward!

Indeed, I believe that in our German Lutheran DNA there yet remains that original spirit of Reformation which recognizes that the Church is ever reforming. On your marks—the Word and Sacraments are ever the same, and the Gospel remains relevant. Get set—the Church's one foundation is absolutely unmovable. Many traditions and practices are meet, right, and salutary—and Luther and the Lutherans preserved those that were. But, when the reformers believed the Church was hamstrung by tradition or traditions, their Gospel freedom moved them to cast off whatever impeded or hindered the message of salvation by grace alone, through faith in Christ alone, as taught in Scripture alone. For them, moving meant some things had to go if the Church was going to go forward. "And to the true unity of the Church," Article VII of the Augsburg Confession holds, "it is enough (*satis est*) to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike. As Paul says: 'One faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all . . .'" It is enough.

We may spend some time arguing over exactly what this means, as we are apt to do. We may go back to the sixteenth century when the Reformation began, or the nineteenth century when our Synod was formed, or the twentieth century when we split and revisit the controversies, and refight the old battles, and reexamine our footsteps to make sure that we are still on the right path—moving forward, running backward—exhausting, painful—a pain in the . . . hamstring! Or maybe we can say, "Enough is enough. It is enough already." There are better ways to spend our energy. Ours is a world that desperately needs Jesus. The faith, the grace, the peace, the hope that Paul promises in our text brings us such comfort. Relax! But for most folks those concepts are foreign language and almost unintelligible. The world still needs reformation—maybe more than ever. When it comes to our lost neighbor's need there must be a sense of urgency—no time to relax.

On your marks, get set, it is time to go. Look around. We may not agree on everything, but certainly we can agree on this: people around us are in trouble. I heard President Harrison once say that this old world is falling off its hinges, and it appears to be so. Of course, throughout human history this has appeared to be so. But we did not live in other eras. God has seen fit to have us live in this time and this place so that at this moment we would figure out ways to bring to others—struggling, suffering,

sinking—that faith, that grace, that peace, that hope of the glory of God that Paul preaches; that Word, those Sacraments, that Gospel that marks the Lord's Church. Forward! Luther surely had his moment, and thank the Lord he seized the day. We are all blessed because of the Reformation. But Luther's moment is not ours. Walther's moment is not our moment. Ours is now, and it is time to go. Might be hard, might be risky. But this is precisely what you are prepared do—what you are called to do. Let's do this. Let's go. God bless you, graduates, and thanks again.

ENDNOTES

[1] Several members of the *Lutheran Mission Matters* editorial committee were in the original audience and immediately thereafter recommended its inclusion in the issue, as it addresses the important relationship of seminary formation to mission leadership for today's context.
[2] At this same occasion, Concordia Seminary conferred the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree to Rev. Dr. Ferry.

“Here We Stand; Here We Go!”: An Interview with Pat Ferry

Abstract

In answering questions raised by his Commencement Address (published as the previous essay), Patrick Ferry unpacks some of the specific issues he touched upon, especially regarding pastoral formation for mission leadership in today’s world. In short, though grounded in the past, the mission is before us, and today’s context is not that of previous generations. Key areas of focus are evangelism and mission, education, and encouragement. Pastoral leaders need to understand the next generation, to be able to bridge to other cultures, to build relationships, and to present Christianity positively in a culture where we are no longer the “home team.”

LMM: The theme of your address could be summarized as “Ready, Set, GO!” So where are we going? You were addressing a graduating class of seminarians and graduate students. Obviously, most are “going” forth into pastoral ministry. But you seem to imply more than just “going out and getting to do what you are now ready to do.” Did you intend a greater sense of “going”?

First, I should say that I have used this metaphor of running a race previously, and yes, beyond the “go” of graduation and behind my encouragement to them was the “Go” of Christ’s Great Commission. So, yes, go—and make disciples of all nations. Go into the world of God’s mission field. Whenever I talk to pre-sem and pastoral students, I like to emphasize that this is a challenging time—a great time—to be about this mission, but we need to go, and to go *forward.* God’s mission is before us, and we need to look outward.

LMM: So, yes, go forward. But where? Is there more direction there? And, as an historian, isn’t there much good in looking back? Your example of running backward seems to address this point negatively, but the runner is also moving forward. Isn’t that also a positive metaphor for how to move forward with our eyes anchored on who we are and what has formed us?

Our default mode seems always to be looking back, and that is important. We do look back, first of all to Jesus! He is the founder and perfector of our faith (Heb 12:2). And we stand on the shoulders of giants in the church’s history, in our own tradition. But the goals are before us. My own father’s world was a different world from mine, from ours. It’s not mine, and it’s not our children’s and grandchildren’s. I remember my father’s house. It was special. But after he was gone, we knew it needed some updating and remodeling, and we did that. And now, once again, it is a wonderful house. It is still the house of my father, but it is now ready for today’s world.

Back to the race, and to the starting line—yes, we do look back. Before one even gets to the starting line of a race, there is a lot of work, almost as much, if not more, than running the race itself. You can't show up without good training, solid preparation. Experience and awareness, yes, "history." That's all very important background, and it gives us the strength and confidence to run the race. But the race is before us. The goals are before us. Again, we anchor our eyes on Jesus. He is behind us but also before us. The past can't become an anchor that drags us down or holds us back.

LMM: So let me go back to the question of where: where are we going? You note that we often find ourselves fighting old battles from previous centuries and ask if there are better ways to use our energy. What are some better ways?

First, I think we need to renew our sense of mission and evangelism as part of our culture. This is not something new to us, but we've somewhat lost our way, our focus. We need to keep our eyes on the goal as part of our culture—who we are and what we do not only as Confessional Lutherans but also as part of Christ's mission to all nations. I think we need to reimagine the importance of mission. It should be part of our culture, and we simply don't think or talk about it enough.

Let me raise three areas of focus. First, evangelism, which is bigger than any one program we "do," or that some folks in our congregations take on. It's not just a "part" of what we do, like a special subset of our congregational life. Nor should it become some kind of "burden" either, as though our failure to witness whenever we can or should then leaves us with guilt. No, evangelism should be the reason God's people exist: to be the people of God to carry out His mission into all the world.

I think we need to reimagine the importance of mission. It should be part of our culture, and we simply don't think or talk about it enough.

It's easy, sometimes, simply to acquiesce to the narrative that there is not much we can do, or that our moment has passed, like that rain cloud. True, we don't want to be pushy, and sometimes that can do more harm than good. But that does not change the fact that my neighbor is not a believer. We don't want to push our beliefs on others—yet we seem willing enough to push other things, like morals or sometimes our political views on others!

I like to note that C.S. Lewis wrote *Mere Christianity* because (as he wrote elsewhere) there are no "mere mortals." Every person we encounter every day is an immortal and eternal being, and we have an opportunity to invite others to the eternal life offered to us in Christ. We need to look at others that way, that no one is "mere" or merely mortal, but everyone is someone for whom Christ died.

Second, we have a treasured history of education, at every level, and that's been the niche of my service to the church. This is about the next generation—folks tell me that they want to have an LCMS for their children, but sometimes they wonder, Will this church, this wonderful expression of God's truth, anchored in the Gospel, be there for another generation? We don't do church on the basis of statistics or numbers, but

we don't need to ignore them either, and the numbers, our demographics, are not good. At the same time, the mission field is exploding all around us.

We have great experience in education at all levels, from pre-school to higher ed, including graduate and professional programs, in church work and, more recently, in a vast spectrum of vocations. How might we address the needs of the next generation and do so within the challenges of the world in which they will live and work—and be part of Christ's mission?

Another area I like to emphasize is encouragement. We do a lot of intramural squabbling, sometimes fighting old battles over and over again and putting each other into various historical categories. We often approach one another with a certain suspicion, as though we must size everyone up, get behind them to whatever agenda or "side" they are on. What if we put that same energy first to listening better, to understanding our real concerns? Can we find ways to work together toward addressing what are likely common concerns and then support each other with a certain amount of respect and trust? Can we get to the middle ground, common ground, and restore that "concordia" among us? We've done that before, and we should be able to do that now, in this critical time.

LMM: You note that, in moving forward, "sometimes something has to go." That might make some people nervous. We don't like to let things go. Isn't there a legitimate concern for losing our heritage, who we are, our "identity"?

First, there are some things that we never let go: justification by grace through faith. That is—and will always be—the article on which the church stands or falls. There are so many issues on which we will not compromise. We have our commitments to our texts, to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Those things don't change, the "text" doesn't change, but the context in which we live does change. That's also the contemporary context in which we apply those texts, in which we proclaim those texts, in which the mission of Christ is carried forward.

We have our commitments to our texts, to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Those things don't change, the "text" doesn't change, but the context in which we live does change.

And here again, we need trust. I need to trust that you know your own context better than I. That's especially true in missions, where we cross into other worlds, other cultures, other neighborhoods, other lives. I have to trust that you know your context and will apply our shared truths appropriately. We often start by assuming that the other is not so competent as I am, and I need to show you how to apply those texts to your world.

God's truth is constant, but there are all kinds of different people, and they will express their faith in different ways. It's not quite as simple as assuming everything can just be translated. It's been said that there all kinds of churches for all kinds of people, and that can be true even within the same fellowship of a common faith grounded on a shared confession. But that can sometimes mean letting go of some

things that may seem dear to me if they might get in the way of what is important to another.

In terms of international mission, my own first-hand experience here is limited, though I have had some very engaging opportunities. I have talked with some veteran mission folks, and we certainly need to do some listening. They bring years of experience and great wisdom, and they provide both great insight along with some criticism of how our attitudes and approaches as a "synod" have changed in recent years. That is especially true in international settings, where we work with and need to trust our partner churches, many of whom we helped form. They have grown by the Spirit's power and now need to be taking their own leadership within their cultural setting. And we need to trust them to know their context better than we. My point is that we need to listen to those who bring experience, including those on the other side of cultural issues.

LMM: This issue of LMM is especially about pastoral formation for mission leadership. Your leadership has been at the university level, but share some thoughts about pastoral formation, especially in light of the mission challenges of today's world.

One thing I did as a university president was to write a letter commending pre-sem students on to seminary. I took that seriously, but I did my best to make that a conversation more than some kind of interview toward a recommendation. We would discuss one's assessment of personal strengths and weaknesses, and a variety of usual things would come up. But then I'd try to expand toward some more collective or corporate sense of our church's strengths and weaknesses, and almost universally the number one strength of our church body would be identified as "we're good at theology." That could mean various things, but there was a sense that we know our theology, our Bible. Our Lutheran theology and doctrine are sound and biblical. But the number one weakness—and it was also almost universally so identified—was a lack of reaching out to others, of not connecting with the community, with those who were not already part of our church. That was not only for the sake of mission but also simply in showing awareness and understanding, especially regarding a host of contemporary issues, where we can seem uninterested in understanding another's perspective or viewpoint. The concern is that such an attitude, even if only a perception by others, not only does not allow us to reach out with the truth of God, to speak the truth in love, but it actually drives people away.

That seems to be true and even acknowledged across our church. As I have said it in the address and elsewhere, "forward is not our forte." Looking forward is part of mission and evangelism, but it's bigger than that. It has to do with those around us, with a sense of looking outward, not inward, in building relationships. John Nunes had a line in a recent Lutheran Hour sermon which used the language of witness as "with-ness," and that says it very well. It's almost always about relationships, building a safe space for those faith conversations.

LMM: Do you have any specific thoughts about how a church body and its seminaries might do better in meeting these mission challenges?

First, we need to connect to the next generation. That was obvious in a university setting. Their general view of our church is that we Lutherans, and specifically those in our church, are judgmental, anti-science, irrelevant. It's clear that others know what we are against, but I'd rather be known for what we are for. We often lose many of the brightest and best of our next generation as church workers—or even just church attendees—because they really don't want to be part of this way of doing church. That comes back to listening. We want to teach, but first we need to listen and then learn from one another. The world of my children and grandchildren is so much different. I want the next generation to know not only what we are for, but also who is *for them.* That is the message of the love and grace of God in Jesus.

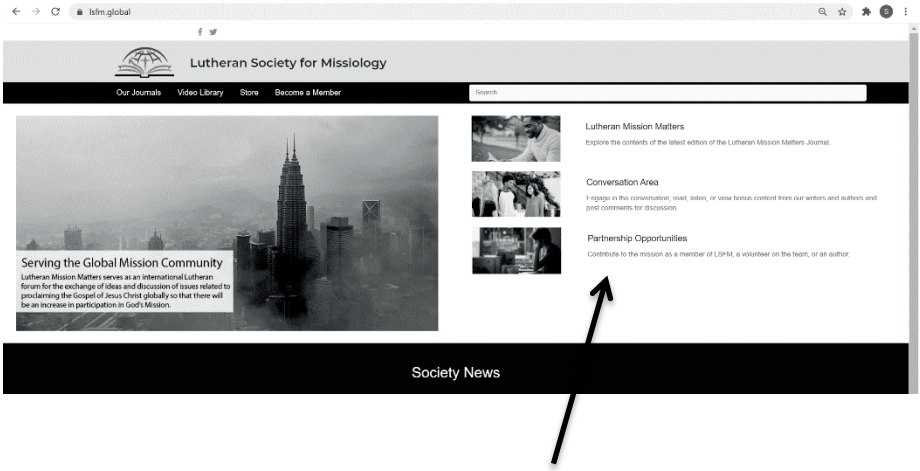
We know how to teach; that is part of our strength in education. But the next generation can teach us something about how to relate. Look at the Youth Gathering and all the energy, the interaction, the exuberant joy shared with one another. It was interesting when that happened in the same summer as our synodical convention, and one might even compare the atmosphere of the former to the debates and wrangling and tension in the air, and to the huddling up in closed groups that characterize that latter aspect of our church's life.

We may be confident in what we know and want to teach; we are very able to catechize those who are listening. But we are not the home team anymore, not once we leave the building. We need to think about how we relate to one another—and then to others who are not part of our fellowship of faith and life.

Thinking about seminary formation, I'd certainly support some fresh ways in thinking things through, getting a variety of people and perspectives around the table. I'm the product of a world class seminary education—and I made a point of reminding our pre-sem students of that. We may have the Cadillac, but maybe there is a Tesla out there that can also be first-class but reflects some new approaches that can be engaged.

Our schools face tremendous challenges, but this is also a time of great opportunities. Some of our ways of working together, including our governance structures, are not necessarily working as they were intended, and some of the structures themselves may need some fresh conversations. I've had helpful experiences, both positive and negative, but no one person or viewpoint has all the answers. The great need is to bring people together, find common ground, keep our eye on the goal, go forward.

Enter the conversation:
“Why Lutheran Mission Matters.”



Be sure to check out the upcoming issue’s Call for Papers (including the theme) and Submission Guidelines near the end of this edition or online (https://lsfm.global) under Partnership Opportunities.

Theological Education: What does this Mean? What's That?

Richard E. Carter

Abstract

The two basic questions in Luther's Small Catechism—*What does this mean? What is that?*—frame this exploration of the significance of the words "theological" and "education." In the field of education, various professional resources invite personal reflection, such as David Kolb's learning cycle and Bloom's taxonomy. Thus, this article asks, What are readers' definitions and assumptions for the terms "theological" and "education"? Personal and professional choices regarding course work, the larger picture of a school's curriculum, and the largest picture of what serves mission, are all part of the reflection invited in this article.

Before you continue reading, please consider writing your own definitions or descriptions of these two words:

Theological

Education

An important assumption of this article is that we each already have in hand, or at least in heart and mind, assumptions about and (perhaps unspecified) definitions of these two terms, "theological" and "education." That is, prior experience with these terms significantly shapes the practice of theological education, and it shapes what we learn from anyone else as we think about these two terms. Hence, exploring our own thinking is an important part of the continuing task of theological education. One writer notes that a theologian could describe oneself as a low anthropologist, that is,

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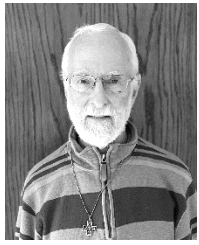

Born and raised on the mission field (the San Francisco Peninsula), Rich Carter retired from teaching at Concordia University, Saint Paul, in 2013. Before, during, and after that time he has taught in Lutheran seminaries in Nigeria, Russia, India, and Hong Kong. He is a Lutheran educator at heart, having decided in fifth grade in a new, one room Lutheran school that he would become a teacher; he received his DCE Certification in 1985. Currently with his wife Miriam he serves as an Associate Worker with World Mission Prayer League, headquartered in Minneapolis.

one who is "curious about other people's views and attributes beyond willpower and conscious thought. Then they turn the interrogation upon themselves. . . ."[1]

Introduction

Perhaps you bypassed the opening exercise. That is understandable. One does not usually begin reading an article by writing part of it. In any case, you are invited here to answer the question, to consider the meaning of the terms and your perspectives on them. This request may sound strange or inappropriate. It may be difficult. For some people, personal learning and thinking styles mean that it is easy to speak or write on a moment's notice. For others, however, it may take a day or a week to formulate thoughts. You are welcome to return later to that opening task. We learn in different ways.

Whatever your pace or learning style(s), this article intends to enhance the knowledge, attitude, and skills of theological educators and other readers for the shared craft and ministry of theological education in any context. The assignment at the beginning of a university theology course required students to turn in a paper titled "Myself as a Theologian." Students might well deny that they are theologians, but the paper must show that they have reflected on what "theologian" means. To dig deeper and check one's assumptions is an important part of working together and learning.[2]

Education

The writing task that opened this article was an introduction to two significant elements of educational theory, which may already be familiar to the reader in some form. The first element is the David Kolb Experiential Learning Cycle. Kolb first published his learning style model in 1984. He names four parts: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation.[3] Perhaps you can recognize all four parts in your reading of this article:

1. You have months or years of concrete experience related to theological education.
2. You paused to reflect, to review your experience.
3. You wrote, offering some abstract conceptualization and perhaps some conclusions from your reflections on your experience.
4. Even now as you read you might be experimenting, testing your definitions or descriptions.

It is appropriate to recognize that such experiential learning has long been part of theological education. As the story is told, theological education in the seminary format is a product of sixteenth century Europe. For how many centuries before that, and in how many other settings down to the present day, has theological education been primarily apprenticeship and mentoring? There was Paul with Timothy, and there was Yale University before the first gift of books. Martin Luther offered his catechisms for theological education, the Small Catechism for the family and school and the Large Catechism for preachers. In particular, the German Small Catechism question, "What's that?" reflects the full-bodied, eager exploration of a small child.

A second major educational theory underlying the opening exercise is Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning. Beginning with the leadership of Dr. Benjamin Bloom in 1956, some educational theorists have accented three domains or types of learning. These can be called cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Similar terms which have perhaps been used in lesson or lecture planning are "knowledge," "attitude," and "skills." More concretely, one can say that whole-person engagement in learning involves head, heart, and hands. Although scholars early in this century have adjusted or adapted Bloom's terms, especially in terms of the cognitive domain, the essential concept remains: the whole person engaged in learning.[4] As with Kolb's Cycle, this concept is a proposal for experiential education.[5]

At this point, some will think of an educational saying often attributed to Confucius: "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." The substance of the saying is perhaps better attributed to Xunzi.[6] Whatever the source, this comment can move us to keep *do*ing in theological education in order to facilitate better understanding, just as the writing of definitions or descriptions at the beginning of this article was an example of "*do*ing."

An experiential understanding of education, that is, learning recognized as cognitive, affective, and psychomotor, can be discerned in the Christian Scriptures. Paul did not simply write doctrinal epistles and add a signature. The cognitive content was intended for living: "Therefore . . . offer your bodies as living sacrifices" (Rom 12:1). This is also experiential learning: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10).

The questions in the title of this article reflect this same attention to experience. They are questions from Luther's Small Catechism. From the Latin edition, intended for school use, one can see the cognitive at work: *What does this mean?* How much "theological education" at the confirmation level has aimed to explore this question? From the German version for the family, as noted above, the question has the ring of an inquisitive two-year-old, whole heart and hands involved, "whole-personly" engaging with the materials of that little book: *What's that?*

The preceding paragraphs were intended to engage you in both Kolb's cycle and Bloom's taxonomy. It should be acknowledged that such engagement may not be common in theological education and other venues for higher education. A professor's courteous comment to a new ThD student was clear: "In your assignments you should provide scholarly study, not personal comment." Of course, theological education should involve the cognitive, careful research, clearly articulated arguments. Still, personal engagement is happening—heart if not hands involved, acknowledged or not. One's personal engagement with material should be deeply respected. And this respect must be evident from professor to students, students to professor, and students to one another. The classroom, the chapel, the field education location, and the conversation at the tea house or coffee shop must be grounded in courtesy and safety.

Theological

The references above to Romans and Psalms can further transition us to the other term I explore in this article, "Theological." What is at stake when we refer to something as "theological"? What is our definition for "Theology"—a "definition that

goes beyond the self-evident 'reasoned articulation about God.'"?[7] Virtually in one breath Paul said "one god" and "many gods" (1 Cor 8:4–6). If your theological education practice is in Hong Kong, it may be that as many as one hundred local gods are "present," or is it just one? "[F]rom ancient records dating back many thousands of years, there have always been two Chinese concepts of the Ultimate, one scholarly and impersonal, the other popular and theistic."[8] And what can be understood from the English rendering of the Cantonese, "the god"? This same rendering apparently applies in Arabic, whether one is practicing Islam or Christianity: The God. *What does "theo" mean? What is "theo"?* The detailed definitions within the volumes of the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament only begin the conversation.

And what of the second half of theology, "logos"? One could start with the significance of the Hebrew, *dabar*. Then what of the Greek, *logos*? Does the Chinese *dao* fit also in this conversation? When we announce that we are doing theology, when we are doing the God-Word, *what does this mean? What is this?* Luther answers this question in the Longer Preface to his Large Catechism. In a great glissando he notes, "For this reason alone you should eagerly read, recite, ponder and practice the Catechism, . . . for [the devil] cannot bear to hear God's Word. God's Word is not like some empty tale . . . but as St. Paul says in Rom. 1:16, it is 'the power of God,' indeed, the power of God which burns the devil and gives us immeasurable strength, comfort, and help."[9] Again, please hear permission that if your personal learning styles favor precision and definition, such a sweeping view from Luther may not be helpful: Catechism—Word—Power. There is a time and place for precision in theology: what did a particular term mean in its Hebrew or Greek, German, or Chinese context? But then, what does it mean when the Word made flesh says, "I am the truth." He did not say, "I am a theological educator who has truths for you." He said, "I am the truth." What does it mean to teach *Him*? To do so not only cognitively, but personally?

In a similar vein, one theologian has discussed the significance of the Genesis creation narratives this way:

> The biblical statement about the creation of the heavens and the earth is a statement about God and our relationship to him. . . . [To highlight the] fixation on how to interpret the factual truth of these is to miss the point. 'In the disagreement over the details we lose the very thing that the writer inspired by the Holy Spirit wants to communicate. . . . This is not a passage about the 'how' of creation, or even primarily about the 'why' of creation. Rather it is a passage about the 'who' of creation.'[10]

Perhaps the point of experiential theology can be described in this way:

> True theology is soteriology. In other words, true theology is not primarily concerned about God's or even Christ's being in the abstract, but about Christ's blessings for sinful human beings. . . . The fullest knowledge of God is not to be found in his essential attributes, but in the place of his apparent weakness—the cross. It is

> this condescension that comforts the heart, in contrast to contemplating the naked majesty of God . . .[11]

A point at the end of the discussion of educational theory is worth repeating here. In theology as in education, to establish and maintain a climate of safety is important. This does not mean that such a relationship is all sweetness and light. The safe relationship with God includes permission to say, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?!"—and that relationship was practiced in Israel a thousand years before Jesus spoke truly on the cross. How much more significant, then, is this relationship for us now in Christ? We read in Romans 3 that God in Christ has freely given us the right relationship. We can therefore practice it with one another.

Engagement

At this point, educational theory and theological truth can be seen to meet one another. In both, not just knowledge matters, but also personal engagement, personal attitude, and skills.

This concern for engagement, for *fides qua* joining *fides quae*, can be noted this way: "Both [of Melanchthon's catechisms] not only presented theological tenets common to the Wittenberg Reformation but also advanced the Protestant concept of vocation. . . ."[12] So also, "Both subjective and objective usages of the term faith are appropriate but quite different. The subjective meaning refers to the experiences of the one who believes . . . Objective refers to what we believe."[13]

If theology and education involve engagement—with God in Christ and with the whole of creation—what might be the implications for the future for seminaries and all levels and forms of Christian and theological education? There are biblical models. They include significant critique: Ezekiel speaks harsh words about Israel and about her enemies; Jesus calls the Pharisees whitewashed sepulchres. Theological education in Scripture includes smashed pots and smelly clothes, and Jesus walking arm in arm, friend to friend with people.

In these biblical models, what is essential? The news must be good. Perhaps theological education should abandon the word "Gospel." It is a religious word, perhaps too routine for many believers and too complicated for unbelievers. The news of Jesus is Good News. It is News, and it is Good. Perhaps instead of "Gospel" or even "Good News," for engaging theological education and for mission, one could say and do "beautiful things." Yes, in our classrooms and in our evangelizing, let us speak and do beautiful things.

To be sure, in terms of educational theory, there must be attention in theological education to personal relationships and affective learning. This includes the reality that if we are working with Good News, some other news must be bad. If there is honor from God, or life, then there must also be shame and death at work among those of us in theological education. Both inside and outside scholarly settings, can we create safe relationships in which bad news can be spoken and good news risked? Once, when I expressed sympathy for people who don't wish to confront their bad news by means of confession, a colleague politely rebuked me: "It's not the confession that's the problem; it's the absolution. We are afraid of being loved that much." Are those of us

in the field of education, theological education in particular, prepared to engage, discern, and even to hear *love*?[14]

Personal engagement in theological education can be described in different words: "First, doctrinal assertions have a doxological function, as they help Christians fulfill the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer."[15] What place have prayer and praise, the Psalms and song in theological education curriculum?[16] Frustrated in a year-long internship, an intern lamented, "These church leaders aren't doing what I'm telling them." Personal engagement? The intern might want to do more than *tell*. In view of Article VI of the Augsburg Confession, which states that justifying faith is bound to produce good works, if good works are not appearing, perhaps the intern needs to ask if justifying faith is actually being heard.

So also one writer asks,

> What's up with equating 'Bible study' [and theological education] with knowing God anyway? Wouldn't it be a horrible thing if we studied the ones we loved instead of bonding in deeper ways by doing things with them? . . . they have names for guys who just study things about a [girl] they like but don't do anything about it—they're called bachelors. . . . I can't think of a single time where Jesus asked His friends to just agree with Him.[17]

Teaching and preaching in the personally engaged ways explored in this article is a risky venture. Is safety or "engagement" a covert proclamation of a postmodern world, that you have your truth and I have mine—that my truth, "liberal" or "conservative," is *the* truth? Our experiences do convey reality, and each of us has a different background. Our backgrounds have shaped the assumptions we bring to theological education, but that does not mean going forward that individual definitions or assumptions are true. It would be foolish not to recognize that both we and our students have already packed our bags with particular knowledge, attitudes, and skills from our pasts. Will we, beginning with ourselves, wisely unpack our bags from time to time so that in the future we listen for the Truth—not identified or equated with our personal truths?

Setting aside personal truths for the Truth is a challenge as we engage in theological education:

> In the context of higher education and the life of the mind [the substance of the Lutheran tradition] means that every scholar must always confess that he or she could be wrong. Apart from this confession, there can be no serious life of the mind, for only when we confess that we might be wrong can we engage in the kind of conversation that takes seriously other voices. Further, it is only when we confess that we might be wrong that we are empowered to critically scrutinize our own theories, our own judgments, and our own understandings.[18]

Curriculum

This term can be used broadly or narrowly, describing what one has in mind for (theological) education. For example,

1. Particular courses;
2. A program of courses, perhaps the most common meaning;
3. Activity outside of courses: chapel, personal prayer, counseling, encouraging sabbath rest and physical health, etc.;
4. Theological study that is not "higher education," not an academically shaped earning of degrees[19];
5. In any location for theological education, at any level, what might be the consideration of cultural and personal factors?

Some issues/topics that could surface in any of these contexts include the following:

1. Do we help "students" at whatever level, aiming for pastoral leadership, to consider whose mission it is? For example, "Ministry is carrying out God's mission, not our mission. Ministry is not the pastor's ministry but the carrying out of God's mission in that community. It is valuable when a pastor sees his role as shepherding the members of a church to be engaged with carrying out God's mission and not simply letting it be . . . only [the] pastor doing the work."[20]
2. Consider education in church music ministry, through years of growing skills and service: "It is not the university degree that defines an expert in this profession [of church music], but rather it is the musical talent and the heart of faith that the professional brings to the task."[21]
3. How do our efforts at theological education compare with Paul's work? "Paul continued to teach daily at his new location, Luke reports, *for two years*. As a result of this program of theological education, "all who lived in Asia . . . heard the word of the Lord." [22]
4. What would theological education look like, and why would it look that way, among the Tausug? They "are Sunni Muslims (98%) but they have also retained many pre-Islamic religious beliefs and rituals. Their world is full of spirits that influence their daily lives, such as causing sickness or good fortune."[23]
5. How would you design theological education, at all levels, in Hong Kong? "Many Christian schools and churches in Hong Kong . . . have long used Scripture to justify Confucian teaching—even when those teachings have led to heretical conclusions. Few examine the difference between Christian instruction to honor parents and traditional Chinese filial piety."[24]
6. In all the theological contexts/curricula, what *doing* is possible? Small group discussions, PowerPoints and videos, role playing, reflective writing?

Conclusion

Perhaps this article is an extension of a "W" with a circle around it. That is, early in my university teaching, seeing that students could use important words but likely not know their depth, I would write, "What do you mean by this?" I wrote this question so often that I began to simply use an encircled "W" next to these important words and explain the practice at the beginning of each course. In one course, around the middle of the term, a student exclaimed, "I get it. When I think about it, it goes deeper." Yes!

Current studies in education are "rediscovering how profoundly the professor's inner life (the professor's identity, integrity, and engagement) colors and shapes the learning encounter."[25] May God bless the theological education journey and all its participants as they explore what these terms "mean" in fully engaged, almost childlike exploration. May we be blessed in our choice to practice theological education in a way that engages knowledge, attitude, and skills, that engages head, heart and hands—always doing so in the context of the Word of grace and Truth, in Jesus's name.

ENDNOTES

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[14] "Vulnerability . . . is the birthplace of love." Zahl, 20.
[15] Nafzger, 22.
[16] In the classroom, I followed the church's liturgical calendar with students, reading a paragraph about the day if it was a festival or commemoration. Once, on February 23rd, I read them something about Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg and then two years later found myself on the road to Ziegenbalg's place of landing and ministry in southern India.
[17] Bob Goff, *Love Does: Discover a Secretly Incredible Life in an Ordinary World* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 199.
[18] Richard T. Hughes, "How the Lutheran Worldview Can Sustain the Life of the Mind," *LECNA* (February 1997): 14.
[19] A common assumption in the US at this time is that becoming a pastor means four years of graduate theological education. There are alternatives; for example, a pastor was ordained in Nepal after one year of Bible Training, Neeraj, personal communication, March 2, 2023.
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The Mission of the Church and Pastoral Formation

James A. Baneck

How is The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) intentionally preparing men to be pastors for the mission of Christ's Church, that is to shepherd those "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" (Rev 7:9)?

The mission of the Church belongs to Christ and begins and ends with Him, the *Alpha* and the *Omega*. Luther writes,

> The first and chief article is this: Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, died for our sins and was raised again for our justification (Rom. 4:24–25). He alone is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29), and God has laid upon Him the iniquities of us all (Is. 53:6). All have sinned and are justified freely, without their own works or merits, by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, in His blood (Rom. 3:23–25). This is necessary to believe. This cannot be otherwise acquired or grasped by any work, law, or merit . . . Nothing of this article can be yielded or surrendered.
>
> Upon this article everything that we teach and practice depends (SA II I 1–5).[1]

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Christians who hold to the Lutheran Confessions teach, believe, and confess that the Church stands or falls on the article of justification.

The mission of the Church is about the proclamation of Jesus Christ and the administration of His blessed Sacraments, by which He comes to His people in His very presence for eternal life and salvation. There is nothing in all creation, from eternity to eternity, that compares to God's plan for the salvation of the world through the incarnation, blood, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This is why Jesus says in Matthew 24:14, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations," and Matthew 28:18–20, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." In Acts 1:8, Jesus says, "But you will receive power when the Holy spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Through these words, Jesus teaches the mission of the church, which is to "preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor 1:23) for the salvation of the world.

What is the greatest need of Hispanic parents? What is the greatest need for the husband addicted to pornography? What is the greatest need for the homeless veteran? What is the greatest need for the Ukrainian refugee? What is the greatest need for the local Hmong community? What is the greatest need for the young man wrestling with his sexual identity? What is the greatest need for the rural family engaged in farming and school sports? What is the greatest need for the aged widow in assisted living? What is the greatest need for all God's people in all circumstances? The greatest need is *eternal salvation through Jesus Christ*! This does not exclude the Church's acts of mercy done in faith toward God and fervent love toward neighbor.

Each generation believes their time is the worst of times. Through the ages, the Church has confessed that *now* the time of mission is greater than ever before. Hermann Sasse served as a pastor during some the darkest days of the last century under the Nazi regime of Adolf Hitler. The day before the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps opened at Buchenwald, Sasse spoke:

> So today Germany stands before the great decision that God has placed before her in history. Yes, seriously, the hour of decision has come upon us, and so the task of missions will be greater. Today, home mission and international mission, inner and outer mission move together. Never before has the task of missions been greater. If we despair, it is because we do not know that the work is not ours, but his alone. The prophesy of the Lord still rings over our people and our church: 'And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come' (Matt. 24:14). . . . By this Word he calls us anew to his service, us sinners, us weaklings, us of little faith: 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you' (John 20:21).[2]

The words of Sasse ring true for every generation, even as St. Paul's words are proclaimed and believed:

> For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!' . . . So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ (Rom 10:13–17).

The Mission of the Church

Before we address how to prepare men to be pastors for the mission of the Church, let us first address the mission itself.

The mission of the Church is Christ-centered

In his treatise on the Church, Bo Giertz contemplates the significance of church buildings with high steeples and crosses that point toward heaven. While this architecture makes a statement, it doesn't tell the whole story. Sasse comments that the world understands the Christian faith as one religion among many others: "People have so many different languages, different forms of government, and different cultures. Why shouldn't they have different religions?"[3] Who is to say that the steeple with the cross represents the only religion? What about a building with a moon and star on top? Or one with a gold Moroni? Or one with an eight-pointed star?

The topic of cultural context and the mission of the Church is not new. Sasse addressed it in the early twentieth century. He writes,

> [The world] can only see in the best intentions of Christian mission nothing other than the propaganda that one of humanity's religions uses to propel itself, and its natural limits are reached when it runs up against the propaganda of another faith to which it is opposed. We have no human means to teach the world better. No evidence of the side effects of mission, or on the cultural meaning of the mission work, or the indisputable blessing that the medical mission brings will make friends of mission out of enemies of mission. This is the particular meaning of the present hour for mission that is so important for Christian that one must concentrate only on that which propels the Church's mission. Mission is not about any cultural values. We are not driven to mission out of a desire to force our worldview on others. Rather the Church of Christ is driven to mission only because Jesus Christ is Lord [Phil. 2:11], to whom all authority on heaven and earth has been given. And he

> has given his Church the command to preach his Gospel to all peoples to the ends of the world.[4]

Sasse defines the mission of the Church with great clarity—all the while surrounded by pressures of culture, context, tolerance, and persecution. In the middle of the static, Sasse speaks these clear and poignant words:

> The Church is driven to mission because she believes in [Jesus Christ] . . . The gospel is not just a religious message like so many others. It is not a teaching that says there is a God who forgives sins and someday will erect a kingdom. The gospel is much more the message that God has come to man. It is the message that there is a Savior of sinners, who calls men from all races and peoples to himself . . .The Gospel is the message of Christ himself . . . The world is outraged by this "boring" message that never changes. But the Church cannot change it. Yes, because it is not her message, but Christ's message.[5]

The person and work of Jesus Christ is in His crucifixion, death, and resurrection, which stand at the very core of everything in all creation, in all history, in all time, in all existence. The mission of the Church is to proclaim and teach Christ for the salvation of God's people. Giertz concludes, "The Church is where Christ is . . . Being the vehicle for this all-embracing salvation, the Church must reach out to all people everywhere and in all times to be what she truly is. And that is catholic."[6]

The mission of the Church is "whole"

The one holy Christian and apostolic Church is one "whole." Giertz writes, "If the Church is the true Israel, then she is from the beginning designed as a totality, and indivisible unit, which came about through an election and an act of creation by God Himself. Any individualism and sectarianism are excluded. One cannot be an Israelite on one's own."[7]

As we are baptized into Christ, we are not baptized as "individual churches," but baptized into the one true "whole" Church. All Christian congregations are a part of the one true holy Christian Church. He writes,

> The essence of the Church lives also in the smallest of her parts, just as the same blood flows through all the parts of the body. This does not mean that each individual congregation would be independent or autonomous. Rather the opposite: after all, it lives indissolubly grown together with other congregations. This organic unity is bound to become organizational as well."[8]

We hold to this same understanding in the LCMS. While we hold that every congregation is self-governing, we do not hold that every congregation is autonomous.

> While congregations of the Synod are self-governing (*Constitution of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Article VII*), they, and also individual members, commit themselves as members of the Synod to act in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod under which they have agreed to live and work together" (Bylaw 1.3.4.1).

Concerning the mission of the Church, the LCMS bylaws state,

> Committed to a common confession and mission, congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod join with one another in the Synod to support one another and to work together in carrying out their commonly adopted objectives (Bylaw 1.1.1).

The above is consistent with the doctrine of the church in the Lutheran Confessions. The Apology states, "The Church is people scattered throughout the whole world. They agree about the Gospel and have the same Christ, the same Holy Spirit, and the same Sacraments, whether they have the same or different human traditions . . . (Ap VII & VIII 10–12).

Giertz expresses concern over the Lutheran Church of Sweden:

> When Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, splitting up in sects was already well advanced. But he only had to ask them, "Is *Christ divided?*" (1 Cor 1:13) to make obvious the total absurdity and culpability of such division. Is Christ divided? Facing that question was enough for the splitting forces to unite again. Either unity in Christ or no Christianity at all . . . The terrible conclusion today is that a divided church is not a true church any longer, at any rate not a sound and vigorous church. Acknowledging the Bible's view of the church, all of Christendom is today called to confess this sin of division.[9]

The mission of the Church is changeless

The mission of the Church never changes because Jesus Christ is changeless. Scripture states, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8).

Whether domestic or international, the message of the Gospel does not change. Yet the Church prays for wisdom and seeks knowledge in how best to teach the Gospel. What is the age of the hearer? What is the language of the hearer? What is the hearer's current knowledge and understanding of God's Word? What is the ethnicity and culture of the hearer, and how might these affect the way the teacher will present the Gospel?

Klaus Detlev Schulz, who served as an international missionary and often teaches internationally, acknowledges that while the mission is the same, one particular structure or model of mission may change depending on the circumstance: "Mission is volatile, always on the move and continuously in the process of restructuring."[10]

However, with all his mission experience, Schulz writes, "All these stations in life have deepened my conviction that mission strategy and practice must be guided by a serious engagement with Scripture and theology." [11]

Yet the role of culture in mission is a complex matter. Schulz notes,

> In fact, the late Lesslie Newbigin observed that 'there can never be a culture-free gospel.' Christians ought to contemplate Newbigin's observation carefully, as his insight may free up all those who serve in cross-cultural witness. Christians come to grips with their own cultural setting and thus avoid potential mistakes and misunderstandings as they witness the Gospel in varying contexts.[12]

Giertz offers an example of mission and cultural context concerning language. He writes,

> Finally, Luther's remarkably sensitive views on customs and cultures ought to inform the modern Church's attempts to bring the gospel to diverse groups of people the world over. Not only should the Gospel be taught and preached in the indigenous people's language, but the newly converted should also find their own expression of faith within their particular cultural context. . . . A good preacher and missionary must take great pains in his choice of words by mingling with his audience and watching them closely.[13]

Christ commands His Church to proclaim the Gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Though the Gospel is changeless, this does not mean the command to proclaim it is without challenges. As the Church strives to faithfully heed Christ's command, she prays for wisdom and seeks knowledge, striving to best to share the Gospel with people of every nation and language.

The mission of the Church is carried out by every Christian

The centrality of Article IV of the Augsburg Confession was stated earlier, and it bears repeating that Lutherans confess that the Church stands or falls on this article of justification. The next article is on the Ministry. Through the divinely instituted Office of the Holy Ministry, the Holy Spirit creates and sustains saving faith through the preaching of the Word and the administration of His blessed Sacraments: "Through the Christian congregation, as the holder of all churchly authority, God calls qualified men to fill this divinely established office and sends them as His ministers to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to administer the Sacraments publicly in the stead of Christ and by His command with accountability both to God and to the Church" (*LSB Agenda*, 155).

The pastor teaches and preaches God's Word in its truth and purity centered on Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world. This is consistent with AC XIV: "Our churches teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church, or administer the Sacraments, without a rightly ordered call." The LCMS defines a rightly ordered call,

or "proper call," one that entails three biblical and confessional mandates: examination, call, and ordination.[14]

God's people receive instruction in the Word from their pastors, and they in turn share this Word of God with their neighbors, each in their own vocation. Christian parents teach the Word to their children. Grandparents share God's Word with their grandchildren. Employees give witness to Christ, according to God's Word, with their coworkers. As baptized children of God in Christ Jesus, we share God's Word and bear witness whenever we have the opportunity.

Concerning carrying out the mission of the Church, Schulz wonderfully describes the relationship between pastors and those baptized in Christ:

> Indeed, given the biblical mandate and the worldwide need for the gospel, we should underscore that the Church has an obligation to *set apart individuals and commission them on behalf of those Christians who remain behind* (Acts 13:3). Although mission can include spontaneous outreach and works of love and mercy arising *from all Christians*, it also represents the intentional targeting of people in the state of unbelief to whom the Church sends individuals.[15]

The earthly church should not restrict any Christian from telling his or her neighbor the Good News of Jesus Christ for life and salvation. Every Christian gives witness to the faith, each according to her or his vocation.

Pastoral Formation

God entrusts pastors with sacred duties and responsibilities. He calls pastors faithfully to handle the holy things of God, to be stewards of His mysteries (1 Cor 4:1). Stewarding God's mysteries occurs in the preaching and teaching of the Word, administration of the Sacraments, Confession and Absolution, and applying God's Word to the faith and life of God's people in pastoral care, leading God's people through this vale of tears into the eternal kingdom of God.

Since the mission of the Church has eternal ramifications, we should not look for shortcuts, easy routes, minimal formation, or even formation processes invented by a single pastor or district. While the Lutheran Church has adopted stop-gap measures occasionally, we should always strive for what is good and right in the formation of pastors and other church workers who fill a divinely established office that shepherds the eternal lives and souls of God's people.

Pastoral formation begins at childhood

The Church, from the pastor to Christian parents and grandparents, congregation members, and commissioned church workers, "trains up a child in the way he should go" (Prov 22:6). We train up a child to love God and serve neighbor through teaching and training in salvation and identity in Christ.

Set Apart to Serve (SAS), the LCMS Church Worker Recruitment Initiative,[16] has developed categories that pertain to the formation of the whole person in Christ Jesus for church work. These areas of development are particularly important as we, the body of Christ, train pastors and other church workers in Christ Jesus for the life of the world.

1. Spiritual formation. Spiritual formation involves immersion in God's Word from an early age. This includes hearing the Word through preaching (Rom 10:17), being immersed in church liturgy (which contains the Word), and studying the Word at church and home. Spiritual formation also takes place in the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. For those preparing for pastoral ministry, spiritual formation involves learning Hebrew and Greek, hermeneutics, isagogics, apologetics based on the Word of God, and an in-depth study of the biblical text as applied to God's people in preaching, teaching, stewarding the Sacraments, and pastoral care.

2. Confessional formation. In the Lutheran Church, these confessions are contained in the *Book of Concord* and are adhered to because (*quia*) they are faithful to the Scriptures: "These Confessions give clear, unambiguous, and certain witness to the Christian faith. They unite all those who bear the name Lutheran and wish to be—and remain—genuinely Lutheran."[17] Every LCMS pastor at his ordination and/or installation pledges faithfullness to all the Confessional documents in the Book of Concord. From childhood, confessional formation begins with learning Luther's *Small Catechism*. Pre-seminary and seminary formation includes reading, studying, and applying the Lutheran Confessions to preaching, teaching, stewarding the mysteries of God, and pastoral care.

3. Character development. Character development is a part of one's baptismal faith and life in Christ. In one's early years, the father and mother and those in authority (e.g., pastor, teacher, grandparent) train and discipline the child in Christian character. A child grows on this foundation through instruction in confession and repentance, in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5), integrity, virtue, manners, civility, humility, and a sanctified life in Christ. Character development is formed through Christ and His Word. In his list of qualifications for overseers (pastors), St. Paul lists several items of character: "Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money" (1 Tim 3:2–3). Those who teach and lead at elementary and high schools, universities, and seminaries continue to inculcate good character in those being formed for the pastoral ministry.

4. Intellectual development. Intellectual development begins in the womb. Reading to a child, singing to a child, having conversations with a child, speaking in an adult voice, and supporting a child's natural desire to learn are

all building blocks of intellectual development. As a child grows and matures, intellectual development encompasses a well-rounded comprehensive curriculum, quality instruction, thinking skills, verbal skills, philosophy, music, math, science, and the like. Such development is beneficial for every child, but especially true for a child taught to love God and serve his or her neighbor as a Christian. This is also true as we raise our children for higher education and especially the Office of the Holy Ministry. The education of pastors encompasses, but is not limited to, (biblical) languages, grammar and rhetoric, theology, history, the skill and art of teaching, higher-level of knowledge of the world and liberal arts, as well as a mastery in doctrine and practice.

5. Physical and emotional development. In 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Paul makes it clear that God redeems and sanctifies each believer: "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." In our vocations as the baptized in Christ, we serve our neighbor through our bodies and emotions. Therefore, as a new creation in Christ, pastors and other church leaders are not excluded from being stewards of the bodies God formed and gave them. Neglecting stewardship of the body jeopardizes the ability to fulfill one's vocation in the ministry. The same is true for the stewardship of emotional health. As we rear our sons and daughters in the faith, we do so in a healthy environment and address emotional issues when necessary.

6. Synodical development. Anecdotal evidence and research reveal that pastors entering full-time church work in the LCMS know little about the Synod. "The Synod is organized to work in support of and on behalf of congregations to assist them in carrying out their ministries as they seek to serve our Lord Jesus Christ, the members of His body, and the world which stands in need of the Word and the impact of His redeeming love" (Bylaw 1.1). Understanding the purpose of the Synod and how we agree to live together is vital for the confession of our faith and the unity in which we proclaim it. Synodical development is nurtured in others by how we talk about Synod in our ministry and circle of influence.

To raise up new generations of church workers within this robust formation development constitutes an intentional, all-hands-on-deck culture change in the LCMS. It means striving for what is good and right for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It means believing in the Gospel and taking it seriously for the faith and life of our children and grandchildren, family and friends, and all God's people. This has been a core message in the *Set Apart to Serve* church work recruitment initiative.

Reflections concerning Seminary formation

The two seminaries of the LCMS are leaders in theological education for our church partners and emerging church partners around the world. Current and future

church workers from across the globe leave their families, homes, and countries for a time to study at either Concordia Seminary, St. Louis or Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.

The Synod has expressed in several conventions that "the most complete means of preparing a man for the general responsibilities of the pastoral office and a lifetime of service is the residential master of divinity route at the Synod's seminaries."[18] And furthermore, "that residential seminary education is the preferred option for the preparation of men for pastoral ministry."[19] There is great value in forming pastors at the residential seminaries. These men are being shaped and formed in community by daily chapel in the Word, face-to-face interactions with their professors and peers, and immersion in a Synod culture that has benefits for years to come.

Synod Bylaw 2.8.1 states that "[Pastoral] candidates shall be declared qualified for first calls . . . who will have satisfactorily completed the prescribed courses of studies and will have received their diplomas *from their respective educational institutions of the Synod* or have fulfilled the requisites of a colloquy or other approved education program of the Synod." Among many other reasons, this bylaw safeguards the qualifications of the *whole Synod* concerning the men who enter the pastoral ministry in the LCMS. Since we maintain that the mission of the Church is *Christ's* mission, we strive toward the most complete means of preparing a man for the pastoral office and agree on the "high bar" qualifications to be a bearer of the eternal Gospel.

No man or woman exits the seminary fully formed. Formation takes a lifetime. The seminary works to form men and women who are well-immersed in the Scriptures, theology, and apologetics. When it comes to the pastoral office, seminary education provides extensive practice in preaching, teaching, pastoral care, and administration through field education, vicarage, and conversations with professors and peers throughout the day. But, still, no one leaves the seminary *fully formed and equipped* for the ministry context and situation in which he or she is placed.

Both seminaries continually evaluate their curriculum as they form men and women for ministry with the changeless Gospel for an ever-sinful and changing world. While we rejoice in the stability of our seminaries, we applaud their agility to respond to generational, cultural, economic, and ethnic challenges in which their students will proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have called faithful teachers of the church to our seminaries to form pastors who serve under the cross. These faithful teachers are forming pastors who will speak the Gospel into contexts influenced by COVID-19, gender and sexual identity politics, multiculturalism, social media, church membership decline, transglobal and international tensions, debates around abortion, persecution, and more.

I contend that the first step in addressing the mission of the Church and pastoral formation is to pray for our seminaries and their teachers, especially their incredible, sacred task of forming men and women for ministry who proclaim the eternal Gospel to a dying world. I contend we pray for our pastors and deaconesses who faithfully serve God's people with His gifts of life and salvation. We pray they continue to be formed through God's Word, continuing education, and their experiences of suffering and joy. We pray for our congregations, who desire faithful church leaders and gladly hear and learn God's Word. We pray they cherish God's Word as the one necessity for their life and salvation, and for the salvation of their children and grandchildren.

To this end, we heed the voice of our blessed Savior: "Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Matt 9:38).

ENDNOTES

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[16] Resolution 6-01, *Joy:Fully Lutheran: 67th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (Tampa, FL, July 20–25, 2019).
[17] McCain et al., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, 9.
[18] Resolution 5-14A, *Baptized for This Moment: 65th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (St. Louis, MO, July 20–25, 2013); Resolution 6-03, *Upon This Rock: 66th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod* (Milwaukee, WI, July 9–14, 2016).
[19] Resolution 6-02, *Joy:Fully Lutheran: 67th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (Tampa, FL, July 20–25, 2019).

A "Conversation" about Seminary Formation for Mission Leadership

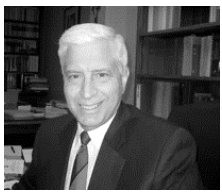
Andrew H. Bartelt

Abstract

Based on a review of curriculum and conversations with academic leaders, the author provides a summary of observations about the current formation programs of four North American seminaries, including his own thoughts, all in the spirit of contributions to this ongoing conversation. He notes, positively, what courses and practica are in place, but he also calls attention to the need for more urgency and creativity in dealing with the challenges of a declining church body in the face of an expanding mission field.

The focus of this issue of *Lutheran Mission Matters* on pastoral formation for missional leadership prompted my own research and reflections into just what a typical seminary might be doing to form candidates to be leaders for today's mission context and challenges. To get a global perspective, I sent a simple questionnaire to all the seminaries on the home page of the International Lutheran Council, with mixed results. From a statistical standpoint, the response was insufficient for any serious analysis; though, in general, the seminaries that did respond indicated that they were very aware of the mission needs of their own context and were attempting to respond with various missions courses and practica.[1] It was striking how similar the curricula were to one another. These similarities indicate a certain regularity in covering the key biblical, doctrinal, and historical foundations along with the practical applications appropriate to different cultural contexts.

Perhaps simply because they were "closer to (my!) home," I was able to conduct a more detailed evaluation of the curricula at the four North American seminaries within that Confessional circle. I engaged in direct and first-hand discussion with



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colleagues at the two LCMS seminaries, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL) and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), as well as the two seminaries of the Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC), Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catherines, Ontario (StC) and Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Edmonton, Alberta (EDM). My interviews included some presidents, deans, and especially those who teach in the area of missions. To best capture the focus of this issue, I posed the simple question, "What—and how well—are we doing in seminary formation to raise up pastors for mission leadership in today's mission context?"

A review of each seminary's academic catalog quickly showed attention to both the larger concerns of our Lord's mission and the more focused attention to outreach. All four seminaries have some kind of statement in the goals and student learning outcomes (SLO, or Programme Learning Outcomes [PLO]) of their Master of Divinity program of pastoral formation, such as the following (one needs to supply something like "a graduate [will be able to] . . ."):

> *"Evangelize those outside the Church in order to gather them into the saving fellowship of Christ's body." (SLO #10, CTSFW)*

Several statements include the awareness of cultural issues that affect mission engagement, such as,

> *"Analyzes and engages cultural and global realities." (SLO 12, CSL)*

> *"Be able to articulate and critically assess the teaching and practices of people in the multi-faith and multi-cultural Canadian context in order to proclaim Christ's love to them" (PLO 2.c., StC)*

> *(a) "Understand Canada's varied social cultural, and religious contexts; (b) be aware of contemporary global issues; (c) be ready to represent Christ and share the Gospel in a variety of contexts." (PLO 5, EDM)*

Several also use language about empowering the laity for Christ's mission, such as,

> *"Ability to prepare and lead members of a congregation to bring the Gospel to those outside the church." (SLO #17, CSL)*

> *"Be able to equip Christians to further the church's mission." (PLO 4.d., EDM)*

> *"Develop the skills and attitudes to equip members of the congregation to further the church's mission in the local community and the world." (1 Peter 4:1–11) (PLO 4.c., StC)*

Further, individual curricula in the various programs all include at least one, sometimes a second, required course in some area of missions, usually quite general, from history of missions to contemporary challenges. These often address cultural

issues, and one theme in the recent curriculum revision at CSL was an emphasis on mission in a post-modern world. Already in the curriculum review done in the 1990s there was a focus on addressing a non-Christian world. Course assignments were often geared to explanations that avoided theological shorthand and could be understood by a seeker or unbeliever. That is also when the traditional "Religious Bodies" course was augmented by a new course on "World Religions." In their current curriculum CTSFW has courses entitled "Confessing Christ in Today's World" and "Ministry in a Pluralistic Context." Evangelism is included in all programs in some way, such as a practicum or requirement on vicarage, including some "hands-on" experience in actually sharing the Gospel with another. A "Community Outreach Project" as a vicarage assignment (CSL) serves as a deliberate exercise in building positive relationships with the congregation's neighbors. A second year "pastoral leadership" course has been added at CSL that includes on-site interaction in local congregations where an emphasis on outreach is apparent. All four seminary programs include a variety of missions electives, though these are usually taken by those already predisposed toward some sort of mission focus. Various mission trips are available. Both CSL and CTSFW have a "Mission Formation" track listed in the catalog, and I know from personal experience how these operated in some collaboration with the work of synod's national missions and the now discontinued Center for US Missions when these programs were developed now twenty-plus years ago. Currently they are relatively inactive.

Of course, a short survey of "what" is being done does not speak to the "how well?" Outcome statements and course titles, even curricular requirements themselves, only go so far in what is actually taught, and more importantly caught, in any educational program. Rather than continuing to catalog the many things that are being done, with some very positive and some more mixed results, I will turn attention to questions of evaluation and try to summarize some more general observations, as these conversations yielded some remarkably similar themes.

1. All seminaries are very aware of the mission of Christ's Church. Of course, this can be defined in different ways and with different lenses by which it is focused. At one level, the mission of the Church includes providing new pastors for its congregations, bringing the Means of Grace to the Body of Christ so that they may be empowered to be the Body of Christ out in the world.[2] And by necessity, graduation, and thus enrollment and thus recruitment, have a certain urgency just to fill the pastoral needs of a church body. The LCMS director of pastoral education noted that statistical analysis has demonstrated that the two LCMS seminaries need to graduate 220 pastoral candidates every year just to break even with the needs of the field.[3] Even with a substantial increase, seminary enrollment (and the shrinking pool from which to draw potential candidates) will be hard pressed to meet those needs.

Statistical data can also reveal the importance of the Church's mission to bring new *people* to our congregations, not just pastors. The dramatic decline in church membership in North America alongside the changing culture in which today's church is engaged in Christ's mission has been logged extensively elsewhere, and the numbers are significant.[4] We do not respond in fear, nor are we driven by numbers. But the data

are alarming. In the book of Acts, the early church rejoiced to see the numbers of believers increasing. Ours are not and have not been for decades.

One factor not fully studied is the more anecdotal observation that new members of the Body of Christ, especially younger ones, have a different perspective on matters of the institutional church, including attitudes—and aptitudes—about educational modes and models. And frankly, it's hard work to engage a culture that is increasingly unaware, uninterested, or even hostile to the Church.

One statistic that stands out as most telling, at least in my own view, is that of adult confirmations and baptisms. This number—for the whole LCMS—hovered around 30,000 per year from the 1960s through the 1980s.[5] According to the statistics in the 2022 *Lutheran Annual*, this number dropped to 26,684 in 1990, stayed in the upper 20,000s through 2000, dropped to ca 20,000 in 2000–2005, has stayed in the mid-teens through 2018 and dropped to a low of 10,991 in 2019, the year before covid.[6] An interesting study would look at the congregations where this growth in new adult members is occurring most, especially in light of the striking statistics that the vast majority of our congregations don't baptize or confirm even one new adult member per year.[7] That question should also relate to issues of pastoral formation and leadership toward outward mission as shaped by the seminaries.

2. One key factor is that of diversity. One of the great strengths of residential education is that it moves a pastoral student from a context in which he is familiar to one in which he may come as an outsider. A seminary is intended to be an arm of the church corporate, where the interests and attitudes of the larger church are brought to bear on any one candidate.[8] This can be very true in terms of people and places, worship styles, the intra-church reciprocity of fellowship, and engagement with theological and doctrinal issues of ecclesiology.

But, for example, the presence of international students on campus can lead to awareness of the global nature of the church, and interaction with those who are already disciples—and are also engaged in making disciples—of all nations.

This is also very true of socio-cultural issues and demography. Of course, if a seminary looks just like "my home congregation"—and seminaries will reflect the demographics of the congregations it serves—this has less effect. But, for example, the presence of international students on campus can lead to awareness of the global nature of the church, and interaction with those who are already disciples—and are also engaged in making disciples—of all nations. This was noted universally, especially by our Canadian partners, where a higher level of diversity seems to be present even among Lutherans. Further, students in specialized programs such as our Hispanic or EIIT programs bring important diversity to campus life when they come for their residential components.

But the challenges of recruiting a diversity of students to residential programs remain, and they are not being resolved. It can be challenging for a minority person to

integrate into a different context dominated by the majority. As a result, a seminary that is 96–97% Anglo will continue to reflect a church body that is also 96–97% Anglo.

3. Seminaries are somewhat limited by the constraints of a very full curriculum. This is not to excuse any lack of mission emphases, which regularly go beyond specific courses in those areas, but to encourage adding more requirements is likely not a helpful path to take. There was a time when four years of seminary was only a piece—a major piece, to be sure—of at least eight, if not twelve years of pastoral formation. Through the 1960s and even well into the 1970s, the strongly academic and largely "first career" path of CSL enrolled students who arrived already shaped to understand a student community focused on theological education and pastoral service, with a certain *esprits de corps* that extended into the ministerium itself. Greek and Hebrew were already learned in undergrad studies and were ready to be used for exegetical study at the seminary. In the Springfield track, students generally came as second career and brought a rich background in congregational life as lay leaders. All candidates graduated and were placed into a circuit that generally functioned well in supporting new pastors in that transition from transactional leadership ("by virtue of the office . . .") to transformational leadership, enhanced by pastoral relationships and experience.[9]

In today's world, we continue to have some excellent pre-sem formation at the LCMS Concordia Universities, but those students are a minority of entering seminarians.[10] Much of what was once shaped before seminary is now crammed into the same four years of residential education, often requiring intensive summer work to learn languages or make up for their place in the curriculum. Second-career students continue to bring their life experiences to bear, but questions of time and money are even more important for students with families, and the residential experience for many can become more like that of a commuter school, in which students juggle studies with part-time jobs, spouses' work schedules, and children's activities. What was formerly a two-track approach at two seminaries distinguished programmatically has become a one-track approach at two seminaries that are distinguished by other criteria, which, by the way, the church as corporate and collegial church, has never addressed.

In short, seminaries are hard-pressed just to cover the essentials of theological education that can lead to certifying those declared to be of "entry level competence and qualified for a first call."[11] Yet there seems constant pressure for an "easy fix" by many in the church to "add a course in x, y, or z." This concern was reflected universally by the faculty and administrators with whom I talked.

4.a. Related to the previous issue came discussion of the fact that missions can easily become "just another course" or topic for pastoral ministry on an already cluttered "to do" list. This is similar to the way many congregations can function as though "missions" is of special interest for those who share that, well, special interest.

This is true also of faculty; not that we don't need specialization of those with experience and credentials in missions and missiology. At one time, back in 1990s, CSL made a very public effort to name a "missions professor" in every academic

department as at least one way to make the statement that missions infuses all areas of study. In an earlier decade, the "World Mission Institute" of Concordia Seminary worked closely with (then) LCMS World Mission to provide mission research and awareness to the church through its seminaries.

But again, this cannot simply "relegate" the topic of missions to those specialists who, instead, can assist all of us in such awareness. Sometimes the core concept that everything we do as the people of God is part of the mission of Christ's kingdom—to be a Light in a world of darkness—can get lost to the compartmentalization and specializations of our lives.

4.b. Also in the "there's only so much we can do" category is the fact that what is *taught* and *caught* in seminary is perhaps less significant than what is *brought* by students to the seminary. Some come with a high level of interest and even background in outreach; others do not. The role of the home congregation and even the larger church context thus has a lot to do with the shaping of seminarians before, during, and after the seminary experience itself. A shift in synodical culture from "mission awareness" to "Confessional faithfulness"[12] has shown the need for keeping our balance between mission and pure theology. There are some who approach seminary with a sense of the pastoral role as what might dubbed an "intellectual apologist" or "cultural warrior" rather than a Seelsorger pastor and mission leader. Others may come with a strong commitment to missions but a weak or shallow theological framework for addressing the complex theological and missiological issues of today's challenges.

Thus, those who do graduate with a focus on mission and outreach are likely those who came *to* the seminary already so inclined. Extra-curricular activities such as a student mission group or use of a missions room or center are voluntary and tend to serve only those who already have such interests. A better assessment of the impact of mission formation within a curriculum would be the number of students who came with a very low awareness, understanding, or interest in missions but who had been changed by their seminary experience.

5. Which raises the key issue of assessment and evaluation. This topic has been part of a sea change in education in general and in accreditation in particular. In sum, the emphasis has been moved from "teaching" to "learning," and for the most part it has raised very important questions. Instead of measuring the credibility of a school by the credentials of its faculty and research facilities, the key questions shift to whether students have actually learned what the curriculum has intended to teach them.

So how might we assess the ways in which seminary education has formed its students for missional leadership in the twenty-first century? Those with whom I spoke at these four seminaries agreed that this is an area crying for more attention. Some attempts have been made, often with more emphasis on negative results (when and why might a candidate *not* do well) than on positive factors that lead to healthy, thriving congregations. Faculty generally know, more anecdotally than from actual assessment tools, who will do well in a mission setting as compared to others who may not. And, again anecdotally, we usually can predict when a candidate and congregation will thrive and grow together in carrying out our Lord's mission. Certainly our district

presidents know, and they also know when things are not going well. But might there be some more regularized research to correlate such healthy congregations to what might be both taught and caught at seminary?

Of course, complicating this issue is the nature and "culture" of individual congregations. Some graduates might enter their first call overflowing with mission zeal but then find that the congregation is not on that same page. These are placement issues, but they are also issues of pastoral leadership—and patient nurture and care. Even more importantly, they are issues of a church's "culture" beyond the seminary at the pastoral and congregational level and at the district and synodical levels as well.

6. There was a universal sense of concern that our traditional seminaries are not meeting the current needs of the church. That is certainly true in simply filling calls and placing candidates into viable congregational contexts. Many calls go unfilled, and many candidates go into congregations in need of some sense of revitalization, including recapturing the joy of participating in Christ's mission to all. That means helping a congregation look outward instead of only inward, and these situations can be very challenging for a young pastor.

On the other hand, many potential students who are already engaged in healthy congregations and mission work may simply not come to residential seminary programs for various reasons. Some are vitally needed where they are. Many potential students, especially those with families, struggle with the decision to come to programs originally designed in a time when all seminarians were single and coming straight from a B.A. in liberal arts. Significant adjustments over the years have enhanced the residential program specifically for families, but often potential students are unaware of these extra services.[13] Some are finding academic programs elsewhere that may seem to fit their needs and contexts. Some find the worship forms modeled at a seminary to be too culturally restrictive for their mission context. Already many of these are exploring other ways into pastoral ministry.

Seminaries, too, are willing and anxious to explore new methods and models, not only in the delivery of residential education but also in integrating what we have already learned and might be able to do with contextual models.

Seminaries, too, are willing and anxious to explore new methods and models, not only in the delivery of residential education but also in integrating what we have already learned and might be able to do with contextual models or pieces. On the one hand, the positive effects of practica, from field education and vicarage to mission trips and site visits, are included in the residential programs; on the other, some of the great strengths of residential experiences can be exported into contextual programs. But often new ideas are resisted and precluded, openly by the church's court of opinion and sometimes quietly by those with governance authority, even before serious consideration and exploration can be done.

Concluding Observations for the Discussion

Moving from what was shared in conversations with seminary leaders, I would attempt to draw some conclusions and suggestions based on our dialogue, though what follows are my own observations.

Where all this leads would seem to move quickly beyond the seminary into the church, but in a grand partnership in which pastoral formation and the mission of the church work hand-in-glove. That starts with a renewed commitment to making disciples *of all nations,* and, in my view, we simply must find ways to increase the number of non-Anglos in all programs. That may mean expanding specialized programs that lead to greater inclusion within mainstream programs that take seriously the multicultural context of the world around us.[14]

We must also take seriously the challenges that minority students face in such programs. Further, there must be more diversity among those in positions of leadership and authority in both seminary and church.

This partnership with the whole church also necessitates encouragement and formation before seminary and continuing education thereafter, not only in formal programs but also in the attitude that we all are continuing to learn together. Pastoral candidates are certified for "entry-level ministry," and they, as do we all, have much yet to learn.

One solution to the overcrowding of seminary curriculum, especially in the areas of actual pastoral ministry, would be some creative thinking about how to decompress the seminary experience by downloading some elements into more experiential learning activities in the early years of parish ministry. The SMP program already does this from the other end, essentially leaving candidates in parish ministry experience while they engage in seminary curriculum. Of course, this slows the process of course work significantly, as a student can take only four courses a year. But one might study and compare the qualitative experience of such "in-service" learning to the practica that are imported into a residential program.

Further, the fundamental question of pastoral missional leadership is one that cannot be limited to the seminaries. They do play a major role in theological education and pastoral formation, but one take-away from this exercise in reviewing seminary curriculum and interviewing seminary personnel is that the development of mission leadership is not only a matter of a "seminary culture" but also of a "church culture." And our fellowship of Confessional Lutherans does have a long history of mission energy and outreach.[15] We also have a long history of care and precision in both theology and practice. There *are* congregations that are flourishing and growing, looking outward to the mission field and not simply inward in serving and strengthening those already there. Seminary graduates need to be placed into church contexts that not only care deeply about "getting it right" but also about "getting it out," as former LCMS President Alvin Barry liked to say.

Almost all churches are dealing with the pressures of the striking decline in institutional church membership, including seminary enrollment.[16] Lutherans in

particular have the great strengths of a solid, biblical theology anchored in God's Word and His unwavering sacramental presence. We also have a sense of creativity in addressing a changing world. If Lutheran theology is truly biblical, then it should be able to sort out issues of theology and culture in ways that truly engage those of all nations, to which we are sent as the People of God and disciples of our Lord Jesus.[17] Luther exemplified this in translating and communicating God's Word into the vernacular language and idioms of the everyday people and culture around him. He also embraced the new and "tech-tonic" change that moveable type brought to the communication and dissemination of God's Word.

We are at a time when seminary education is under extreme pressure to meet the needs of the church as it engages in a growing mission field literally at our doorsteps. We are also at a time when we have a host of models, means, and media by which to raise up and form pastors with missional leadership for our contemporary challenges. There is much to be said for our traditional models, but that should be articulated, documented, assessed, and evaluated—not simply asserted. There is also much to be learned from new and creative ways of connecting faculty and students with the pastors and people—and pastoral candidates—of our congregations.

The LCMS already has over a decade, or in the case of the Center for Hispanic Studies, over thirty years, of experience and data with various non-traditional and contextual programs.

The Lutheran Church—Canada has long had a program for "Pastors with Alternate Training." It has been fifteen years since the Specific Ministry Pastor program of the LCMS was initiated, with generally positive assessments along the way,[18] and we have learned much about the role it can play in meeting the needs of the church. In addition to the Hispanic Center, we have experimented with programs specifically designed for engaging non-Anglo and immigrant mission work through the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology at CSL and the Cross-cultural Ministry Center at Concordia University, Irvine.[19] We have worked hard to bring mission experiences into residential programs; there are many ways to bring strong academic and theological coursework into contextual programs that form pastors within mission-focused ministry. Such experiences and assessment data should be collected, collated, and analyzed by decision makers at local and synodical levels.

Every generation seems to address the needs of theological education and pastoral formation for its own time, and the past generation and even decade, too, have been marked by a host of studies and summits, confabs and conferences, task forces and convention resolutions that seek to address this issue. Unfortunately, and in my opinion, they have not benefitted from all the input that is both needed and available. They have often represented only certain stakeholders within our fellowship, and therefore run the risk of creating further division rather than building a unified and more universally accepted approach.

Much of this has happened with more of a sense of caution and resistance than urgency and careful creativity. A renewed commitment toward our strong, residential programs is vitally needed and already underway in the LCMS, including an emphasis on formation and recruitment.[20] This will take time to produce results, and the demographics continue to show a dramatically declining "pool" from which to draw potential seminarians.[21] At the same time, our Confessional churches have tremendous

resources in theological and mission leadership both in their seminaries and throughout the church to work together and, yes, walk together toward

engaging the whole church, pastors and people, in the great mission of our Lord to be His people in a world of lost sinners, making disciples of all nations.

ENDNOTES

[1] Two of those that did respond also contributed extended essays. see Christu Das, "Theological Education for Ministerial Formation: An Indian Reading," and Acir Raymann, "The *Missio Dei* under the Southern Cross: Some Considerations," elsewhere in this issue.
[2] This assumes that attention is actually turned from what is done inside the church to how the people of God interact with the world outside. Here, in my own view, the power of the recessional could be reinforced, as after we have come together as the Body of Christ gathered around the Presence of Christ, we are led by the cross out into the world.
[3] James Baneck, based on statistical studies with LCMS Roster and Statistics. Dr. Baneck noted that this number is based on "worst case scenario" projections.
[4] According to LCMS Roster and Statistics, 67% of congregations that reported are declining or showed no increase over the past year. It is assumed that many of the 20–30% of congregations that do not report would also show zero growth. Statistics for average attendance has been so affected by the pandemic since 2020 that current data is not helpful, but there has been a steady downward trend since 2007 from ca 150 at worship to ca 100.
[5] Data from The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, Department of Human Resources, *Statistical Yearbook* (St. Louis: CPH, published yearly until 1981) and The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, *The Lutheran Annual* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, published yearly with statistical data included after 1982).
[6] The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, *The Lutheran Annual of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod,* Compiled by The LCMS Office of the Secretary, rosters, Statistics, and Research Services (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod and Concordia Publishing House, 2022), 798.
[7] Increase/decrease in membership (see footnote 5) combines both losses and gains. One estimate is that over 50% have not baptized or confirmed one adult in the past year (see William Utech, "The 'End' of Seminary Education: Healthy and Flourishing Congregations," elsewhere in this issue).
[8] This was a key discussion in the development of the SMP program, which is highly contextualized. Of course, the greatest strength of a contextual program is that it is contextual. But the greatest weakness of a contextual program is also that it is contextual—and largely limited to one context. For this reason, the SMP curriculum includes certain residential components, bringing all students together within the campus community in residence. For the same reason, the limitations on the roster category of an SMPastor are intentionally all at the *synodical* or trans-parochial, trans-congregational level.
[9] These might be dubbed the "esse" of the office of the pastoral ministry (transactional authority conferred) and the "bene esse" of the pastoral ministry (transformational leadership earned through relational ministry).
[10] And in a curriculum increasingly determined by the needs of those non-traditional students, those who have gone through even the remnants of the old "system" can feel penalized in various ways. One example might be the delay in using the biblical languages and thus in building immediately on what was already learned in undergrad programs.
[11] This is the official language of the seminary faculty certification resolution.
[12] This was noted by several colleagues as something reflected in more recent students.

[13] Robust changes have happened over the past generation, from married student housing and the clothing and food pantries to more recent attention to wives and families, such as staff support for transitions and community building, a full curriculum for sem wives soon-to-be pastors' wives, youth groups, sports and children's activities, reduced tuition at local Lutheran schools as well as homeschool support groups, and financial advising. On one hand, such intentional changes accent the need and expense of adding these services, but on the other, they have certainly made the residential experience possible and positive for families, and many families attest to the unexpectedly positive and rewarding experience they would have missed had they not come to seminary.

[14] In his dissertation research, Larry Vogel demonstrated that the conservative denominations that have shown growth over the past decades are those who have found ways to be more inclusive of all ethnicities. See his very recent "Behind the Numbers: A Traditional Church Faces a New America" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2023).

[15] As one example, Michael Newman has drawn recent attention to this in his *Gospel DNA: Five Markers of a Flourishing Church, Learning from a Movement called "Missouri,"* (San Antonio: Ursa Publishing, 2016, revised 2018).

[16] Statistical data from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) shows a pattern of increase in total enrollment from 1990–2000, a period of transition from 2000–2008, and then over a decade of decline from 2008–2020. LCMS seminaries had 633 MDiv students in 1996 (60% of their total enrollment) and 371 in 2018 (44% of their total enrollment). In 2020, however, the total enrollment in all ATS schools showed a surprising increase. See Chris Meinzer, "An Enrollment Surprise—More ATS Schools Grow than Decline for First Time Since 2006," *Colloquy Online* (Holiday 2020), https://www.ats.edu/files/galleries/an-enrollment-surprise.pdf. In his further analysis, Meinzer notes that the Covid-19 pandemic caused more seminaries to offer online courses that attracted new students, and the same pandemic slowed graduation rates, adding to the number of enrollees overall. Further, this enrollment reflects total enrollment, not necessarily MDiv. In fact, there is also a growing shift from MDiv programs to MA programs, both academic and professional. And those schools that have showed the most consistent growth have all been approved for online delivery. Since 2020, however, total enrollment in MDiv programs has declined from 30,387 in 2020 to 27,635 in 2022. See also Tom Tanner, "Reports of the MDiv's Death are Greatly Exaggerated," *Colloquy Online* (January 2019), https://www.ats.edu/files/galleries/reports-of-the-mdiv-death.pdf. In this related essay, Tanner, Director of Accreditation at ATS, explores the fact that "the percentage of all ATS students enrolled in the MDiv has remained relatively stable for the last two decades—43% in 2006 at the MDiv's enrollment peak, and 41% ten years earlier in 1996." [Note: in 2020 that percentage had dropped to 39% and in 2022 to 35%]. Tanner writes in response to the "rather famous *Patheos* blog eight years ago, written by an ATS seminary professor" (see Frederick Schmidt, "Is It Time to Write the Eulogy?: The Future of Seminary Education," *Patheos*, March 21, 2011, https://www.patheos.com/resources/additional-resources/2011/03/is-it-time-to-write-the-eulogy-frederick-schmidt-03-21-2011). In his analysis, Tanner notes that, oddly, "the biggest growth in the MDiv has been among denominations that typically do not require the MDiv for ordination," and that, also oddly, "Less than half of all MDiv graduates (49%) [are] serving as pastors or associate pastors." Thus "the MDiv seems to be serving different vocations than it did just a few decades ago." But he concludes by simply raising these observations and does not follow up with any further analysis.

[17] Larry Vogel (op. cit.) has pointed out that this is fundamentally an issue of catholicity and ecclesiology, and therefore a matter of right doctrine.

[18] See, for example, the initial reporting done to the church in two White Papers, May 2012, and March 2013. There have been several internal assessments of the program at Concordia

Seminary, St. Louis, of which I am aware, which have both confirmed positive feedback and indicated areas for improvement. See also the summary of some anecdotal interviews with SMP students by James Marriott, "Preparing Mission Leaders in the SMP Program" elsewhere in this issue.

[19] See Glenn Fluegge, "Integrating Theology & Mission in the Cross-cultural Ministry Center (CMC)," elsewhere in this issue.

[20] The LCMS initiative, "Set Apart to Serve" is a major and comprehensive program toward church-wide cultivation and development of a positive understanding of the vocation of pastor (and other church servants) toward seminary recruitment. See also James Baneck, "The Mission of the Church and Pastoral Formation," elsewhere in this issue.

[21] As one statistic among many similar, the number of "youth confirmed" in the LCMS in 1967 was 58,490. In 2020 that number was 12,010. The decline can be traced in a nearly straight line, e.g., in 1977: 40,926; in 1987: 30,699; in 2002: 25,542; in 2012: 18,470; in 2017: 15,512. Data from The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, Department of Human Resources (see fn 4).

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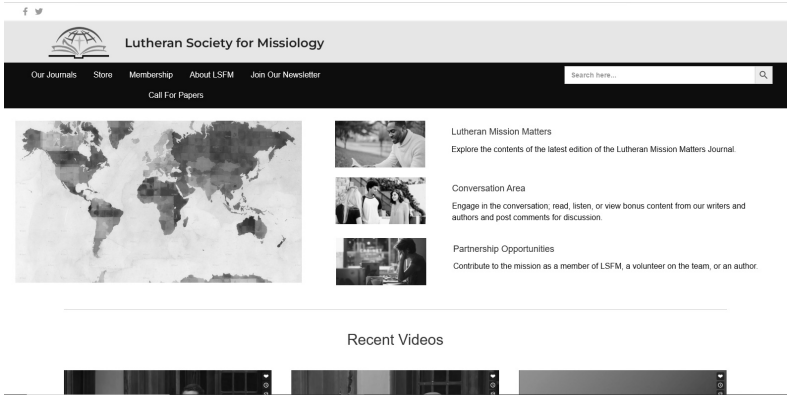

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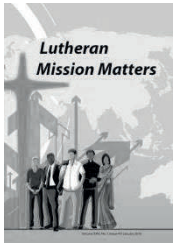

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The *Missio Dei* Under the Southern Cross: Some Considerations

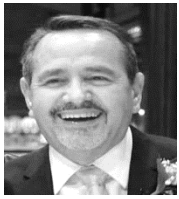
Acir Raymann

Abstract

This essay aims to present the history, challenges, and development of God's mission in Brazil. These are some observations that come from a short and humble analysis of my *alma mater*, where I also had the privilege of teaching for the last forty-eight years. These observations also deal with the challenges and opportunities faced by seminarians in relation to theology and culture. Academic programming is an ongoing process and requires regular analysis and revision. New horizons may also illuminate the curriculum that can be amplified when we look at the proclamation of the *officium proprium* of Christ under the Southern Cross.

The term "seminary" derives from the Latin *semen*, which means "seed." Since biblical times and by Lutheran interpretation, a theological seminary does not develop by itself but by the seed of the Word of God. Seminário Concórdia, like other Lutheran institutions in the Southern Hemisphere, is located under the constellation of the Southern Cross.[1] From a historical perspective, Seminário Concórdia is older than the Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil (IELB) church body. Mario L. Rehfeldt, church historian and son of a missionary, notes that the seminary started in 1903 in South Brazil, and the IELB church began one year later in the same geographical area. The seminary's president and only professor was sent by the LCMS to be "pastor and missionary" in Brazil. So, both the seminary and the church herself developed out of the Missouri Synod's missionary mind and work,[2] and the fact that the seminary is older than the church demonstrates that the first missionary recognized how essential pastoral formation is for the *Missio Dei* in this country under the Southern Cross.

In this vein, the seminary was not established to visualize an "external" mission but an "internal" one, because it was mostly about serving Germans in Brazil. This made communication easier since the Germans came looking for those who could speak their language. But, still, the early days were not easy. There was strong opposition. Local people accused the missionaries of being agents and spies for the benefit of a foreign country.[3] In South America, the presence of Christianity was more often than not associated with violence and exploitation. Douglas Rutt, a former missionary in this continent explains, "In the conquest of the Americas a partnership



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between the sword and the cross was forged in which . . . 'The sword opened the way for the cross, and the cross sanctified the work of the sword.'"[4] In other countries, too, Christianity has been seen through even a darker lens. In China, for example, the arrival of Christianity and Buddhism have been compared like this: "Buddha rode into China on a white elephant, while Jesus rode in on a cannonball."[5]

As heirs of the culture and worship styles of German Lutheranism, Lutheran churches on Brazilian soil did not face great difficulties in transplanting the culture and mission mind from their ancestors. However, this insular perspective changed during World War II when pastors and missionaries were forbidden to use or speak the German language. They were forced to learn and speak Portuguese only. Moreover, enemies of the church burned their German books, hymnals, and liturgies. Some were put in prison for several years. But by God's grace new horizons were opened for the church in terms of vision and mission.

Mission and theology

When we talk about mission, we are talking about theology. Rutt asserts, "Theological education is mission in a very real sense. Mission is theological education in a very real sense. The two go together as two sides of the same coin." He adds, "The practice of mission engages with theological education in a dialogical manner."[6] With that, Klaus Detlev Schulz agrees: "Lutheran theology and mission are not antithetical terms but that missionary potential springs from deep within Lutheran theological articulation."[7]

One cannot look at the church without looking at the Office of the Ministry, just as one cannot look at the Office of the Ministry without looking at the seminary. There is constant interaction among the seminary classrooms, the pulpit, and the church pews.

Challenges

In the nineteenth century, the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher popularized a concept of "church" as the free association of people who, having the same faith, decided to come together and organize a church. According to him, "The Christian Church is formed by the gathering of regenerated individuals for orderly interaction and cooperation."[8] The emphasis is on the organizational and social aspect of the church, namely, a human organization like any other. The church is seen from an anthropological and sociological—rather than theological—point of view. It is the world doing the church's agenda.

This is a challenge and danger that surrounds the church in Brazil and affects the formation of theology students as they feel attracted by other factors, either for economic reasons or for greater representation in society. Decades ago, Hermann Sasse called attention to this danger when he affirmed that "to proclaim the gospel of forgiveness, to declare to repentant sinners the forgiveness of their sins, to distribute the Sacraments with all the gifts of divine grace contained in them, this, and nothing else, is the proper task of the minister of Christ as it was the *officium proprium* of Christ Himself. This the Church had to learn in the great crisis of the second century."[9]

And thus he gives a clarion call also to churches today that follow the pattern of a purely sociological organization: “The consequence is that also the parish minister becomes more and more an administrator and organizer who rushes from meeting to meeting and has not enough time for his proper calling as a shepherd.”[10]

Reinhard Slenczka retrieves the definition of theology given by Albertus Magnus (ca. 1200–1280). It says in Latin, “*Theologia a Deo docetur, de Deo docet, ad Deum ducit*" ("Theology is taught by God, it teaches about God, it leads to God”). Slenczka points out that God Himself is the subject of theology insofar as it is He who teaches theology. The second part of the definition concerns the theologian/pastor for whom God is the object of what he teaches or preaches. The third part, however, shows that it is the purpose of all theology to bring God back those who are distant or estranged from Him.[11] It is interesting to note, continues Slenczka that all three parts of this definition are in the present tense. This means that they all happen at the same time, coincidentally, simultaneously. For those who are confessional theologians, pastors, and theology students, this means that God Himself is currently at work in what we do.[12]

The pastoral office does not exist outside the Means of Grace, just as there is no church or biblical and confessional theological formation without Word (absolution) and Sacrament. Ministry, therefore, is not an agency for coordinating gifts, but the ministry of Christ Himself for the forgiveness of sins. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of the absolution of sins whether public or private. Sometimes I have the impression that God's people are not sure about the forgiveness they receive from God during a church service or outside of it. Perhaps they doubt because they imagine their sin is too great and cannot be forgiven. This applies also to pastors and seminary students. It is often observed among those who care for seminarians, from the dean of students to the various professors who provide academic, emotional, and spiritual support that what seminarians need is forgiveness and absolution.

The world offers alternative forms of treatment: palliative measures to reduce stress, psychological trauma, and feelings of guilt. Jacob A. O. Preus III analyzes the alternatives often suggested by world experts when the Church becomes inattentive to forgiveness and God's grace. He writes, “All of them see the solution to the human problem in us. The “grace” suggested by these theories is found, one way or another, in us. Either it is in the inexorable course of history itself (Hegel) or in the restoration by whatever means possible of the original equilibrium (Marx) or in therapy (Freud) or in creating a more positive environment (Skinner), or in manipulating our genetic make-up (Wilson). In every case, the answer is within us.”[13] Such influences are relatively popular, at least in Brazil.

Sometimes a congregation and its pastor allows psychologists to take precedence in the therapeutic process of people who need help. One should not condemn psychology or other social sciences, which are important disciplines and auxiliaries to theology. But we must question the extent to which this can lead to an invasion of fields, of interference in sectors whose functions are quite distinct. Of this relationship between theology and culture, Andrew H. Bartelt is optimistic, arguing that both complement one another and stand in dialectic tension:

> We cannot and will not "build the church" by sociological means and methods (and many church planting methods show that it can be done, without attending to much theology!). But why would we not engage sociological insights in a ministerial (not "magisterial") way as a "first article gift" of our Creator that may assist our understanding of the human and social world into which the Creator came as Redeemer to form the Body of Christ among us?[14]

The tension exists. Pastors and the seminary students should expect to wrestle with it. Perhaps what the distressed person really needs when seeking help is simply the certainty of forgiveness—forgiveness that only the church, in the name of Christ, can offer. And that is our *officium proprium*.

Adolph Köberle states that, distanced from the Gospel, namely Baptism, Holy Supper, and Absolution, human beings will seek access to God in three ways: moralism, rationalism, or mysticism. Moralism seeks access to God with the assumption that our good works and virtues should promote our status before Him. Rationalism exalts human reason, confusing human wisdom with God's revelation. Mysticism, on the other hand, seeks an immediate union with God through emotional experience. Moralism, rationalism, and mysticism—all motivated by law—represent substitutes for God. This problem borders on idolatry.[15] The fact is, as Scripture shows, God works ways that confound all man-made systems of religion and all forms of self-styled spirituality. The question is, How can the seminary, with its curriculum, face a complex situation like this?

Curriculum and mission

Presently, our seminary has a theological program that includes six years of study, including a vicarage year. With some variation, our curriculum is organized around the four basic areas of theology, but these have gradually become more fluid to include the study of anthropology and culture. The idea is to engage students in God's mission among all people who represent the diversity of God's creation. As is characteristic of a Lutheran seminary, the program requires students to study biblical languages (Hebrew, Greek) along with courses in exegesis; history of the Christian Church and the Lutheran Confessions; Lutheran liturgy, worship, and church music; homiletics; and pastoral counseling.[16]

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We have three required courses in the specific area of missions and evangelism. They are (1) The Formation and Person of the Missionary, (2) Practice in Mission, Diaconal Program, and Urban Ministry, which involves the application of theological

foundations of the missionary and diaconal practice in different social contexts, and (3) Seminar on Mission, which deals especially with theology and missiological principles as applied to the challenges and opportunities of urban ministry.

Under the umbrella of the Urban Mission Program, the seminary has an agreement with a Lutheran congregation in Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro, where, twice a year, seminary students go for voluntary mission work under the supervision of the pastor of the local congregation. This project includes mission in the favelas. The curriculum also includes missionary training in the form of practical experience witnessing in hospitals, schools, prisons, and other institutions.

Together with the IELB and the LCMS, the seminary is sending several missionaries to different countries in Africa and in Latin and Central America thanks to the "Alliance Project" agreement.[17] In addition, every two years the seminary and the church offer a mission forum at the seminary that is open to seminary students and pastors. Currently, seventeen countries around the world are served by missionaries who graduated from Seminário Concórdia.[18]

The Church of Brazil has an agreement with the Brazilian Lutheran University (ULBRA) which allows our students to graduate with a baccalaureate degree in Theology. The courses are taught either by seminary professors or other Lutheran professors. Specific and supplementary courses related to exegesis, pastoral theology, and Lutheran Confessions are offered at the seminary exclusively for the future pastors of the Lutheran Church. While most of the courses offered at the university are now migrating to a fully online format, the program at the seminary is entirely residential. Of course, during the pandemic we all learned that distance education is an important asset that may be also a possibility for the future.

Culture and images

To talk about culture and context is complex, as noted above. But I would call attention to one aspect of culture in Latin America related to theology and worship, and of course to mission. The culture of Latin American people is one of icons: people believe what they see. Historically, images are parts of Lutheran theology and art as well. We confess that we were created in God's image. When humanity rebelled against God, how would that image have to be restored? Chad Bird says that it was renewed by the very image of God, Jesus Christ. "The Image would restore the image."[19] Bird says that like an artist, God does not restore a human's image from scratch. But "he summons the original man, the one whose image is on the canvas, and has him sit down again so he can repaint his portrait on the existing canvas. The Father, looking to his image, the Son, repaints us in Christ's image, that we might reflect him and know him once more."

That is good Lutheran theology, but this is not the concept of "image" for most people in Latin America. "In the minds of many Latin Americans, the suffering Christ, always dying, is a Christ with whom they can identify."[20] Many Catholic churches are filled with images and paintings, and the crucified Christ is publicly exposed. However, instead of a dead Christ on the cross, the painting shows a dying Christ—a Christ that never dies.[21]

Seminarians must understand this culture to repaint this negative Christological image. Several years ago, our seminary had a course in art appreciation. This raised the question about whether the time has come to restore the art on canvases and stained-glass windows to promote preaching and theology through the eyes. The reredos in the altar of the church where I spent my childhood, for example, was adorned with a beautiful statue of Jesus in front of a painting of Christ's open sepulcher. It was a very comforting vision.

Luther was in favor of paintings and statues because they may help people to remember and understand God's Word. According to him, they do no more harm on walls than in books.[22] He goes on to say that "images for memorial and witness, such as crucifixes and images of saints, are to be tolerated."[23] Unlike the iconoclasm of both Anabaptists and the Reformed, Luther asserted his approval of artistic expression in church life and worship. Mark C. Mattes asserts that "together with the Reformed and other Christians, Lutherans applaud art in daily life. But counter to the iconoclasm of either the Reformed (Zwingli) or the enthusiasts (Karlstadt), Luther affirmed a role for the visual arts in public worship."[24] Mattes notes that "Luther preached on St. Christopher, using images, and took his staff to be the Word of which we learn."[25] He concludes, "Thus physical things, including human artistic creations, are fit vehicles for God's address to sinners."[26] The minds of Latin Americans are open for a more artistic and iconic presentation of the Gospel of the dead and resurrected Christ.

Final considerations

We must pass on what we have received from our ancestors. God says that we should not love the world (1 Jn 2:15), but to do His mission implies that we must love people (Lev 19:18; Prov 25:21–22). This is a difficult task, and Christians causing offense to the world is to be expected (Jn 15:19).

We certainly face challenges at the seminaries in Latin America because those who aspire to the Office of the Ministry are, like all of us, *simul iustus et peccator*. Usually the candidates come young, still somewhat immature, and with little biblical or theological knowledge. At the seminary they start to form a community that Helmut Thielicke calls "theological puberty."[27] Early in this theological formation it is wise to consider the advice of Harold L. Senkbeil: "The challenge for pastors [and seminary students] in every generation is to link the person and work of Jesus to every shifting era by means of his unchanging word—not to contextualize the message, but to textualize people into the text of Scriptures."[28]

God's mission in Latin America has extraordinary opportunities. We need more prophets and "sons of prophets" as was the case among the people of Israel in the time of Samuel and Amos (1 Sam 10; Amos 7:14). For that we have a great opportunity to follow Jesus's advice: "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2). The Lord has answered this prayer for 120 years. He will continue to bless His mission carried out through the seminary and the church, not only under the Southern Cross, but under every other star in His created universe—*ad maiorem Dei gloriam*.

ENDNOTES

[1] The Southern Cross is the constellation most represented in flags around the world. Because it is visible in the Southern Hemisphere, its use is always associated with the southern countries. Australia, Brazil, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and Samoa are countries which use the Southern Cross on their flags.
[2] Mario L. Rehfeldt, *Um grão de mostarda: A História da Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil*, trans. Dieter Joel Jagnow (Porto Alegre: Concordia Editora, 2003). Rehfledt writes, "The beginning of Concordia Seminary in Bom Jesus was compared with the beginning of Concordia Seminary in Perry County, Missouri, United States, by Dr. Fuerbringer because it became so vital for the future of the Brazilian District as Perry County became for the Missouri Synod, USA" (55). Concerning the church, he adds, "Almost a year later, on June 23, 1904, was established the Synodical District, that is, 'the 15th District of the Missouri Synod'" (64).
[3] Rehfeldt, 45.
[4] Douglas L. Rutt, "Luther, Tentatio, and Latin America," *Logia* 19, no. 1 (2010): 7.
[5] Jiang Menglin, quoted in I'Ching Thomas, "Why Do Chinese People See Christianity as a Cultural Invasion?" *Christianity Today*, November 7, 2022, https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2022/november-web-only/chinese-christianity-western-culture-imperialism.html. Thomas writes,

> Since the 19th century, Christianity has been associated with Western imperialism in the minds of Chinese people. Both Catholics and Protestants came to China together with Western imperialists. In fact, many of the Western missionaries of that generation rode on the coattails of the European opium traders to bring the gospel to the Chinese. For example, Karl Gützlaff, an early Protestant missionary to China, joined the Jardine Matheson opium fleet as an interpreter in order to reach more Chinese with the gospel. Former Peking University president Jiang Menglin aptly described this historical baggage when he compared the arrivals of Buddhism and Christianity in China: "Buddha rode into China on a white elephant, while Jesus rode in on a cannonball."

See also Herbert E. Hoefer, "Why Are Christians Persecuted in India?: Roots, Reasons, Responses," *Missio Apostolica* 7, no. 2 (November 1999): 77–86; Sam Thompson, "Christology in Asia: Major Trends in Christological Reflection from an Indian Context," *Igreja Luterana* 81, no. 1 (2020): 82–97.
[6] Douglas L. Rutt, "Theological Education and Mission," *Lutheran Mission Matters* 28, no. 2 (November 2020): 200.
[7] Klaus Detlev Schulz, *Mission from the Cross: the Lutheran Theology of Mission* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), xi.
[8] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (New York: Harper, 1968), section 115.
[9] Hermann Sasse, "The Crisis of the Christian Ministry," in *The Lonely Way: Selected Essays and Letters*, trans. Matthew C. Harrison et al. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 371.
[10] Sasse, 371.
[11] Reinhard Slenczka, "Confessional Church and Theology—Confessing Theologians. A Global Challenge Today" (keynote address, 3rd World Seminaries Conference on "Challenges to Seminaries in Forming Lutheran Pastors Today," International Lutheran Council, Erlangen,

Germany, March 29–April 1, 2007), 5, http://ilconline.wpenginepowered.com/files/2011/10/Slenczka-International-Lutheran-Council-2007.pdf
[12] Slenczka, 5.
[13] J. A. O. Preus, "Sola Gratia: God's Gracious Favor for the People of God in a Secular World," in *O Povo de Deus*, ed. Gerson Luis Linden, Ely Prieto, and Clóvis Jair Prunzel (Porto Alegre: Editora Concórdia, 2014), 212.
[14] Andrew H. Bartelt, "Keeping our Balance in our Own Context: Keeping the Cross in Cross-Cultural and Taking the Con Out of Contextualization," *Concordia Journal* 47, no. 1 (2021): 61.
[15] Adolph Köberle, *The Quest for Holiness*, trans. John Mattes (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1936), 1–18.
[16] The Seminary offers also a program for lay people called Theological Education by Extension. The focus is on evangelization and is divided into three modules involving an introduction to the Bible, principles of interpretation, biblical and theological fundaments of mission, Christian life, and Christian witness.
[17] This program is a partnership between the LCMS and the IELB that sends graduated students to develop mission projects with seminaries, especially in Africa. The program requires three intensive months of learning the local language and culture.
[18] Seminário Concórdia, *Catálogo Acadêmico 2022* (Porto Alegre: Editora Concórdia, 2022), 20.
[19] Chad Bird, *The Christ Key: Unlocking the Centrality of Christ in the Old Testament* (Irvine, CA: 1517 Publishing, 2021), 24.
[20] Rutt, "Luther, Tentatio, and Latin America," 10.
[21] Rutt, 5–6.
[22] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: Liturgy and Hymns,* ed. J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 84.
[23] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: Church and Ministry II*, ed. J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 91.
[24] Mark C. Mattes, *Martin Luther's Theology of Beauty: A Reappraisal* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 134.
[25] Mattes, 135.
[26] Mattes, 135.
[27] Helmut Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, trans. Charles L. Taylor (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company,1968), 12.
[28] Harold L. Senkbeil, *The Care of Souls: Cultivating a Pastor´s Heart* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2019), 17.

Theological Education for Ministerial Formation: An Indian Reading

Christu Das

Introduction

The word *seminary* comes from the Latin *seminarium*, meaning "seedbed" or "nursery," where plants are nurtured before they are transplanted.[1] Seminaries are like good soil for ministers-in-training: they support growth and maturation so that graduates can thrive within the church system upon their graduation. Seminaries are meant to train ministers of the Gospel. Therefore, those who train seminarians should have a clear perspective of the Gospel; that is, whatever they do, say, teach, and criticize should be in the interest of the Gospel.

Seminaries are established to meet the needs of ministries and churches. However, a complaint common among seminary graduates is that their education did not prepare them well for actual challenges in the ministry. Further, they complain that much of what they learned at seminary is irrelevant to the situations they find themselves in after graduation. This begs the question, Is the problem with the seminaries themselves, the students, or the Church? Most people readily blame seminaries for not being "contextual" in their teaching. In other words, seminaries seem to be answering questions the Church is not asking and not answering the questions the Church is asking. This implies that seminary curriculum fails to prepare students to "meet the needs" of the people in the Church.

In response to the criticism about the formation of Christian ministers, many seminary faculties keep revisiting their curriculum in a bid to meet the trending challenges and needs in the Church. New courses are introduced on a regular basis while the contents of older courses are reworked for this purpose. Invariably, it appears that seminaries are trying their best to make their graduates relevant to the Church. Not only that, but some of them have courses/programs affiliated with universities in order to "qualify" their students for public service. These programs help seminary graduates serve beyond church frameworks. Despite all this, it seems to many that seminaries are not doing enough.

Many have recognized that we are facing a global crisis in theological education. We see students entering seminaries zealous for ministry and leaving passionate for academia. But they have very little idea how to empower the Church, and often they

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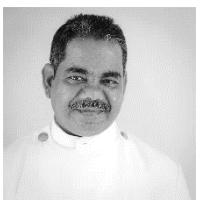


Ordained in 1986, Rev Dr D Christu Das served as a pastor of India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC). In 2014 he joined the Concordia Theological Seminary, Nagercoil, India, to teach in the Department of History. From 2017 onwards he serves as the principal. Several articles and books in English and Malayalam are published to his credit.

have no genuine desire to do so. Churches complain of graduates who have lots of answers for the wrong questions, and who fail to engage with the communities in which their churches reside.

However, churches still look to theological colleges for their leaders, and consequently the solution must lie with changes in the system of seminary education. The questions that need to be investigated are, Does theological education prepare ministers for "glocal"[2] culture? How should theological education transform to better equip ministers?

To address these concerns, we must analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the ongoing theological training system.[3] This article does so in four sections. First, I examine theological education in the context of emerging issues. Second, I describe Concordia Theological Seminary, Nagercoil (CTSN), with which I am closely associated. Third, I report on the educational structure and curriculum details of Serampore University, India, an affiliate of CTSN. Last, I provide a few additional observations and evaluations.

Part I: Theological Education in the Context of Emerging Issues New Trends in Christian Ministry

In the global culture, new kinds of ministries are emerging. Many preachers have their own television channels; others live stream their sermons. Electronic media gives ministers the opportunity to create their own ministries according to social demand, outside of their local context. Ecumenical and charismatic movements, mega church ministries, prosperity gospel preachers, independent evangelists, and emerging new messiahs are all contributing to confusion about the pastoral ministry in public as well us within the Church. Furthermore, corruptions, unending disputes and disunity, administrative stagnations, moral degradations, and power politics are weakening the ministry of the Church. As a result, dedicated and God-fearing young people are not coming forward for ministerial training.[4]

Some critics say that pastors and church leaders are self-centered. They question these leaders' money, motives, and moral weakness. Some leaders are more interested in self-serving projects and maintaining institutions than the core mission of the Church. This truth can easily prevent healthy Christian ministry. Additionally, Christians easily confuse the mission and ministry of the Church as they get involved in church administration. Lack of perspective is evident in their ministry outlook.

Technological Development and Seminary Training

The digital age in which we live raises important philosophical and theological questions about what constitutes true community. The quality of personal relationships in a technological society, the interplay between the "real" identity and "constructed" identity, and the discernment of God's "presence" in the virtual world are important questions we face today. The place of e-media in theological education and spiritual and pastoral formation must be carefully weighed. Online learning has become a highly competitive educational marketplace today. What is our theological, pastoral, social, and pedagogical responsibility in nurturing this new generation of church

leaders? How can we evolve a theological-ethical response in this regard? Hybrid modes of teaching-learning are likely here to stay.

Other Challenges

In recent years, the question of nationalism in India and South Asia has been undergoing tremendous changes since Hindutva[5] has become mainstream. The unholy alliance between religion and politics has been a continuous attack of secular nationalism in India. Religious minorities are portrayed as aliens to Indian culture. The exclusive attitude toward other religions is dangerous. Freedom of religion and expression of faith is threatened. The current situation demands a theology of nation building to protect and respect diversity and promote the peaceful coexistence of all communities.

The world is marked by the climate emergency crisis, systematic injustice and corruption, and the exploitation of poor, indigenous, and marginalized people by pro-capitalist, market-driven economies and development initiatives. Narrow-mindedness and racism nurtured by national populisms, issues of human sexuality and exclusion of minorities, issues related to migrants, etc. are on the rise. The theological community must be proactive in promoting justice and peace to address these emerging issues. Lutherans in India have a role to play in this important venture.

Significance of Theological Education

Theological education is the training of men and women to know and serve God. It has the potential to be the seedbed for the renewal of church ministries and missions, and their commitment to Christian unity in a changing world. Christian education is Christ-centered, which puts salvation first and teaches the claim of Christ upon one's life in harmony with the teachings of the Bible. *Theological* education has the broad goal of equipping church leaders and their congregations within their respective lives and contexts. This includes the doxological, liturgical, *koinonial*, diaconal, and missional dimensions of the Church. In other words, the aim of the theological education is to cultivate an integral and holistic spirituality that sustains ministerial students in their commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Guided by the Holy Spirit, they live out the truth and values of the Gospel, thereby helping them become faithful and effective ministers, teachers, and servant leaders in the Church and society. Therefore, the theological education system should take into serious account the candidate's personal and professional formation that will contribute to his or her communitarian and vocational service to the Church and world.[6] With these ideas as background, we turn to an overview about Concordia Theological Seminary, Nagercoil, India.

Part II: Concordia Theological Seminary, Nagercoil

Concordia Theological Seminary, Nagercoil (CTSN) is an educational institution in India that is entirely owned and governed by a single church, the India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC). CTSN exists to provide higher education and training in

theology for pastors and church workers. Missouri Evangelical Lutheran India Mission (MELIM)[7] started their work in Nagercoil in 1907. Along with the propagation of Gospel, missionaries felt the need for education in effective communication and leadership. So, educational institutions at different levels became part of almost all local mission centers. Since missionary personals were few and the demand for workers was vast, local people were educated in Lutheran doctrine and catechesis and deployed for evangelistic work.[8]

A theological school was started at Nagercoil in 1908,[9] and The Missionary Conference revised the seminary program in 1916 with definite goals and objectives. The eleventh General Conference held at Ambur in 1921 resolved to open a three-year pastors' course with vicarage between the second and third year.[10] Rev. Theodore Gutknecht (1924–1928) was the first principal of the seminary, and Paul Heckal and E. A. Noffke were assistants.[11] During Gutknecht's administration, a new seminary building was built with additional classrooms, a place of worship, a library, and quarters for students. Gutknecht also started women's classes.

Under the third principal, Anton J. Lutz (1937–1948), students received diploma certificates, and student wives were given special instructions during their stay on campus. Mr. M. Philip was the first Indian national professor at CTSN.[12] In 1957, the seminary became affiliated with Serampore College (University).[13] In 1962, the first batch of CTSN students received the Serampore Diploma of Licentiate in Theology (LTh). In 2011, CTSN was upgraded to an English-medium Bachelor of Divinity institution, and the first batch graduated with their BD degrees in 2015.

Under the Serampore curriculum, CTSN has been offering nonresidential diploma and degree courses for the interested lay people. The seminary also conducts periodical and annual programs like Pastors Refresher Course (PRC) and In-Service Training for Pastors (IST). These programs help pastors stay up to date on meeting contemporary challenges in church ministry. Faculty members serve as resource persons for the various nurture programs and leadership trainings throughout the IELC.

CTSN is distinguished from other Christian educational institutions in India since it focuses intentionally on following the scriptural, confessional, liturgical, and sacramental characteristics of the church.[14] While framing the constitution of our church IELC, the former missionaries made special efforts in naming the board of the seminary as the "Board for Pastoral and Lay Training (BPLT)." This board decides the functions of the seminary in terms of training the clergy and equipping the laity. The board also oversees the production of materials for Sunday Schools, youth work, and women's work. Thus, the seminary is playing a vital role in upholding the IELC's Confessional Lutheran position in an ecumenical and multi-religious context. CTSN will celebrate its centenary in 2024.

Among other large and notable ecumenical institutions, CTSN remains as a denominational seminary in its assertion that Confessional Lutherans have a distinctive mission and message in an ecumenical age. Ecumenism, pluralism, sociology, philosophy, and other Indian religious traditions and theological subdivisions are part of the curriculum. This helps students develop an open-minded and respectful attitude toward others without giving up their own beliefs and traditions.

Part III: Senate of Serampore College (University).

The Bachelor of Divinity is a master's level program at Serampore University and its affiliates. Most protestant seminaries are affiliated with Serampore, and the senate has given its affiliates freedom to maintain their respective denominational identities. Most secular universities in India do not have a Christian theology program. Already at the BD level, Serampore introduces students to the foundations of theology. The program is primarily aimed to prepare and equip candidates for the diversified ministries of the Church and service to the society in general. Through the curriculum, students become familiar with critical academic scholarship in a Christian environment, and they mature as disciples of Jesus Christ for the cause of the Gospel. The program seeks to instill and cultivate good moral values for a lifetime in resonance with the vision and mission of the Church. Character building and spiritual growth are part and parcel of theological education. In essence, the BD program is intended for ministerial training to serve the Church and society.[15]

Theological education and theological educators do not exist apart from the Church and people of God; they are integrated within the Church's life of worship and witness. But the special character of theological education as a vital and integral ministry is to be recognized, respected, and owned by the Church. Today, Serampore has sixty-five affiliated theological colleges and seminaries of Protestant, Orthodox, and Pentecostal traditions, among others.

Part IV: Observations and Evaluations

A globalized world necessitates global partnerships. For first-century Christian ministers, Jesus Christ was their seminary. The New Testament shows numerous partnerships among church planters, subsequent disciples, and local leaders. In our age, the world is interconnected, and people are on the move as never before in history. The kinds of partnerships that existed for first-century Christians should continue within the realm of theological education today so local churches can benefit from the global Church!

Twenty-first century theological teachers must equip themselves with the necessary skills to teach effectively, and they must adopt the firm belief that effective teaching helps the entire theological system achieve its goals. Exchange of students and teachers between different theological institutions will enhance the teaching and learning experience. Ongoing revision of curriculum and syllabi, teaching methods, disciplinary procedures, and evaluation strategies move together with a common understanding. Ministerial candidates must focus on their academic, spiritual, and communitarian formation. Institutions must develop strategies to respond to new learning situations along with effective classroom management and the use of technology and digital media.

The pioneers of theological education in India were Christian missionaries from the West. Even today, theological education in India still looks like Western models since the system was borrowed from non-Indian cultures. Some of the curriculum we follow was written for Western contexts. The illustrations and case studies are taken from Western contexts. Western books and journals dominate Indian seminary

libraries. Thus, a sense of dependency is visible in the infrastructure, architecture, academic system, curriculum, and leadership patterns of Indian seminaries. These ideas also encourage Indian students to migrate to the West instead of advancing themselves in their native culture.

Every theological institution in India is running with financial aid from their overseas mission partners. How we can move beyond the dependency syndrome is a daunting question for Indian churches and their theological institutions. Globalization has also increased the issue of dependency in the neocolonial world. One step toward avoiding dependency is for indigenous Christian institutions to be consciously contextualized in their local situation.

Dependency need not be a problem if Western contributions can come without depriving non-Western Christians of their leadership roles. In the postcolonial mission, Western standards for operations will no longer be the principle for work. Each locale may set standards based on local resources, history, and culture. Local ownership and accountability will free the churches and seminaries from dependency. New mission models suggest genuine partnership and solidarity in *Missio Dei* rather than paternalistic relationships, which may be doing more harm than good. Unquestioned dependency might be affecting the development of an indigenous theological education for the Indian Church.[16]

All seminaries seek to prepare ministerial candidates to be successful church leaders and citizens of the world outside of the classroom. After leaving college, they must continue to learn and explore new solutions to life's challenges. The impact of their molding extends to the people and communities they serve. When we discover the impact of a pastor on a church, we are likely to understand the impact of the seminary on the church. Churches are looking for true visionaries as their pastors. Seminaries should take this desire seriously.

St. Paul noted to Titus, his pastoral trainee, "[elders] must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it" (Titus 1:9–11). Pastors should be prepared to give a defense of their faith with gentleness and respect (see 1 Pet 3:15). They must develop a sound mind which can readily refute errors and philosophies that contradict healthy doctrines. If in the formation period a ministerial candidate is not disturbed about the assaults on the Gospel, they may end up as a pastor who does not care about false doctrines in the Church. When seminary lecturers are dispassionate about missions, evangelism, prayer, and daily devotions, churches end up with pastors of the same attitude. Seminary graduates must be passionate about their spiritual vitality and growth for the sake of the Church.

Seminary academicians should assume pastoral ministries and missions in their classrooms and in all relationships. When those mentoring pastors are themselves pastors at heart and in all they do, their mentees become more effective pastors. Students are bound to imitate their mentors, and they will reflect in their ministry what they absorbed from their seedbed.

Today, many Christians are not satisfied with Christ alone. They want something more, and to this end they gather teachers for themselves who will tell them what their itching ears desire (2 Tim 3:3). Pastors are thus placed in a dilemma: Obey the Bible's mandate or listen to their churches' cries for teachings and services relevant to their immediate needs. Pastors must learn to keep a healthy balance between the teachings of Scripture and the needs of congregations and communities. Students are often at a crossroads, unable to apply what they had learned in school with what they face in their churches.

What the Bible says about humanity's total depravity and Christ's finished work are as relevant in our generation as ever before. This is why pastors and preachers cannot afford to let the world and their churches dictate to them, just as the sheep cannot dictate to the shepherd.

Pastoral training and Christian ministry are now more specialized and professionalized. Seminary education is to continually reveal and reflect the Biblical mandates for the Church. The message of the Bible is not old-fashioned because human needs throughout history remain constant: salvation from sin and eternal judgment, reconciliation, regeneration, repentance, and eternal life. What the Bible says about humanity's total depravity and Christ's finished work are as relevant in our generation as ever before. This is why pastors and preachers cannot afford to let the world and their churches dictate to them, just as the sheep cannot dictate to the shepherd. Therefore, let the seminary and the churches listen to one another, and let them follow Scripture with the Holy Spirit guiding. This will ensure that pastors and churches are always ready for service in our world today.

Another observation is that present seminary training emphasizes curriculum content much more than character values. Whereas the certification for ordination is for both character and learning, there seems to be a greater slope toward learning than character formation. If we expect pastors to be blameless, as the apostle Paul suggests, especially in 1 Timothy 3:1–7, then seminaries must train candidates thoroughly in biblical virtues, and their teachers must exemplify those virtues in their own lives. We cannot have lesser standards for lecturers than we do for their students and expect better pastors.

Conclusion

Theological education for ministerial formation faces new challenges globally as well as locally. Both theological education and Christian ministry are part of God's mission. Mission is our total response to God.

Seminaries exist to serve the purpose of the Church. If graduates are not cultivated with the values, virtues, skills, experience, and information necessary to serve the

Church, irrespective of other achievements, the seminary has failed. If the students and graduates are ill-prepared and ill-equipped for the Church's ministry, the seminary has lost its essence. Therefore, to achieve their purpose as seedbeds for ministers who serve the Church, seminaries must move together with the Church to be effective. We must remember that the seminary is a brainchild and the backbone of the Church. Without the Church, seminaries are of no relevance or use. Seminaries and churches need each other for both to become more efficient and impactful. Seminaries are more than academic centers for theological studies. They are instruments of the Church for forming ministers of Word and Sacrament.

Theological institutions today are confronting profound transformations, dilemmas, and questions. These challenges call for both interpretation and action. For pastoral training to be more effective, it must become more relevant for the places and spaces in which the candidates find themselves. For sustainable excellence, academics and *praxis* are to walk *side by side* in our seminaries. Seminaries have been a tremendous blessing from God. Certainly, they must carry on the essential duty of forming pastors for the Christian mission to the wider society.

ENDNOTES

[1] *The Grolier International Dictionary* (1981), s.v. "seminary."
[2] This word was first recorded in 1980–85 and is a blend of "global" and "local." It is an adjective of or relating to the interconnection of global and local issues, factors, etc.
[3] For an overview of contemporary realities and trends in theological education across the world, see Dietrich Werner et al., eds., *The Handbook of Theology in World Christianity: Theological Perspectives, Ecumenical Trends, Regional Surveys* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2010).
[4] Churches and theological institutions need to study this issue in depth to arrive at possible solutions.
[5] Hindutuva is an ideology or movement seeking to establish Hinduism and Hindu culture as dominant in India.
[6] In 1932, John H.C. Fritz issued a warning as follows: "No book on Pastoral Theology can cover in detail all the cases which will ever arise in pastoral experience, but can and should state the divine principles according to which any case can and must be decided." *Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), 2.
[7] MELIM is the first international mission organization of Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, USA.
[8] Henry Hamann, "Report" (unpublished conference proceedings, General Conference, Nagercoil, India, January 18, 1922), 1, hard copy available in the archives at Concordia Theological Seminary, Nagercoil, India.
[9] "Minutes of the Education Committee of General," vol. 2 (unpublished manuscript, 1943), 10, hard copy available in the archives at Concordia Theological Seminary, Nagercoil, India.
[10] Before opening a new Seminary, the founders of the Seminary had to confront many problems such as regionalism and language. Henry Hamann, "Report," 12.
[11] Nagercoil District Conference (unpublished conference proceedings, South India, 1907–1957),13, hard copy available in the archives Concordia Theological Seminary, Nagercoil, India.
[12] Nagercoil District Conference, 13.
[13] Herbert M. Zorn, *Much Cause for Joy,* MELIM 75th Anniversary Publication (Malappuram: Concordia Press, Vaniyambadi, 1970), 53.

[14] See the CTSN website, www.ctsn.edu.in
[15] The nature and objectives of the BD degree program at Serampore College (University) can be found in the revised edition (2014) of the Senate of Serampore College Regulation and Syllabus, available at https://www.senateofseramporecollege.edu.in/assets/uploads/cms_pdf/1586072491bdcourse_2017.pdf
[16] For more discussion on this matter, see Christu Das, "The Indian Christian Lutheran Communion: Challenges and Hopes," *Gurukul Journal of Theological Studies* 22 no. 2 (June 2011): 66–75.

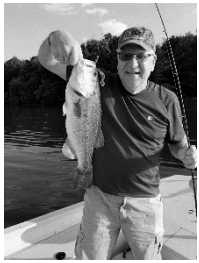
The "End" of Seminary Education: Healthy and Flourishing Congregations

William Utech

Abstract

Historically, most American seminaries have not been overly or overtly concerned with the health and well-being of the congregations that receive their graduates as pastors. This lack of concern was born of these seminaries being founded under "Christendom," wherein the dominant culture of the country affirmed and supported Christianity and her institutions. For seminaries, this meant a guaranteed "market" for their graduates. In these post-Christendom times, that luxury is gone, and seminaries must get better at raising up leaders who will shepherd congregations toward health and vitality.

It was my joy, honor, and privilege to serve from 1996 to 2013 on the faculty of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. During those seventeen years, I taught hundreds of great students, and I got to know and appreciate my faculty colleagues, who are not only some of the smartest men in their fields of expertise, but also some of the wisest men I've ever met. But it was during the 2007 academic year, after I had completed my doctoral work on the philosophy of theological education, that I began to experience what others have called "a holy discontent." I became discontented with the way formation for pastoral ministry was happening in North American seminaries, including at Concordia. I could not get over the fact that even though our institution was well-respected in our church body, generously supported by a growing donor base, and reaccredited every ten years by the Association of Theological Schools, so many congregations in our church body that our graduates served continued to slide into decline, crisis, sometimes chaos, and oftentimes, closure. What is the goal of seminary education and formation for ministry if not a church body comprised of healthy and flourishing congregations?[1] That was my question, and it dogged me for another half-dozen years until I left the faculty to become the Mission Executive for the Minnesota South District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.



For over 35 years William Utech has served church and world as pastor, seminary professor, and district mission executive by preaching, teaching, presenting, and writing in ways that encourage pastors, leaders, and congregations to think, plan, and act in missional ways, so that they are able to break free from old and unhelpful status quos, and move, more and more, toward health, vitality, and starting new ministries that reach new people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Seven years later, and much to my surprise, I was one of forty men nominated for the Office of President at Concordia Seminary and was asked by the search committee to reflect on the philosophy of seminary education. In doing so, my old "holy discontent" returned, which is why I have written this essay, and why I begin by quoting an article written some years ago by Frederick Schmidt:

"Our seminaries are dying and the Master of Divinity degree has been discredited. Will we make the necessary changes to better prepare leaders for the Church, or will we limp and wander into the future?"[2]

With this shocking statement and challenging question, Schmidt begins his critique of the state of seminary education and pastoral formation in the United States today. He is alarmed! He notes the growing number of denominational officials and congregational members who argue that attending seminary may actually be detrimental to the formation of effective leaders for the Church. He notes the large number of mainline seminaries that are selling their buildings and property, cutting faculty, and eliminating programs. He notes how theological schools compete over a shrinking pool of prospective students, and how they must rely more and more on scholarships and lower their academic standards in order to attract students.

Though the reasons for this crisis are both numerous and long-standing, Schmidt argues that two primary factors stand out as responsible for the current situation. The first is a loss of focus on the mission of preparing *pastors*. Schmidt puts it this way:

> In the quest for academic respectability, seminaries have not always remembered that preparing clergy was the mission and lifeblood of their institutional life. Some have focused on preparing scholars, which though essential, is secondary to its primary ministry of preparing new generations of spiritual leaders. Some have prepared students who lacked the practical skills to effectively lead a congregation. Others have produced students who were so poorly grounded in the Christian faith that they lacked the necessary spiritual formation to be effective.[3]

The second factor is a disconnect between what congregations of the church need and what the faculty desire to deliver. Too often, Schmidt observes, seminary faculty members have "indulged their academic interests, creating both classes and curricula that correspond with their research issues and academic agenda but don't necessarily speak to the basic and perennial needs of the church's ordained ministry."[4]

The Crisis in Theological Education

How a theological institution's focus and faculty need to be aligned to provide faithful and effective pastors, missionaries, and leaders[5] for the church, then, is a primary focus of this paper. At the outset, we must remember that we did not get here overnight. The crisis in theological education has been brewing for over two generations, and many in the church (including in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod) are concerned about it. They note that the United States is the third largest

mission field in the world, not just because of all the immigration over the past thirty-five years, but even more because the Anglo population of the country is becoming more and more disconnected from the church. They quote poll numbers that indicate how on any given weekend only 18 percent of the US population attends a Christian worship service, and they conclude that the mission field is our own moms and dads, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, neighbors, classmates, coworkers, and even our enemies. The mission field is no longer only overseas but is now in our living room.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has not been immune to any of this. One of the most impactful trends in the LCMS is the decline in attendance in many congregations and schools. For many years, over 50 percent of LCMS congregations have not baptized or confirmed a single adult in the past year,[6] and 80 percent or more of all LCMS congregations report no growth in annual worship attendance.[7] More people are dying or dropping out than are being brought in.

The causes of this are, to be sure, numerous. Primary among them is the reality that American culture is now "post-church" or "post-Christendom."[8] Americans are no longer paying attention to the old mainline denominations that once held a privileged and influential spot in American society. The paradigm for how the church needs to be the church in this country has thus shifted, and every denomination and congregation that cannot or will not adapt to the new paradigm eventually loses its "market share" of adherents. It could be said that the old business adage, "adapt or die," is exactly what is happening to thousands of Christian congregations across the country that are unwilling and/or unable to be the true church in ways that post-church paradigm people can actually see, hear, understand, be influenced by, or be drawn toward.

A major reason the church in America has been caught flat-footed and unprepared for this unprecedented post-church paradigm shift is that seminaries have failed to prepare pastors for leading congregations into this brave new post-church world. How have they failed? George Barna has identified two faulty assumptions as major contributors. In his 1998 study, *The Second Coming of the Church,* he argues that it has long been assumed that if a pastor is a good enough teacher, that gift will compensate for mediocre leadership. "But Americans," Barna counters, "need to be led. Assuming that decent teaching without good leadership can adequately direct people's spiritual paths and personal lives is the recipe for disaster that has permitted the Church to lose its influence and impact."[9] He also notes that it has long been assumed that a qualified pastor should have a seminary degree. Barna's response to this assumption is both lengthy and harsh:

> The built-in assumption, of course, is that seminaries recruit godly people who are called to full-time ministry service and possess great leadership potential, then train them to be competent church leaders, awarding the degree as a credential of fitness to lead people in their spiritual journey.
>
> In reality, seminaries do nothing of the kind. They remove seminarians from the real world for several years and put them through an academic exercise in which they are taught how to

> exegete Scripture and teach. Those are important and necessary skills for the Church, but they are not synonymous with leadership. Consequently, both churches and pastors are set up for failure and disappointment.[10]

Barna is not alone. Many American Christians have expressed concern with the state of the church and its pastors, and thus the state of the theological institutions that form pastors for ministry. Indeed, when reliable research finds that "formal theological training has a negative correlation to both church growth and overall quality of churches,"[11] one cannot deny that the concern is founded.

In the past, when American culture was a "churched" culture, seminaries were generally held in high regard because they met the needs of their constituents. Every denomination had a school that trained its pastors for service in its congregations. Seminaries enjoyed a guaranteed "market" for their "product." As institutions, they thus enjoyed the luxury of being mostly immune to outside criticism. But as Christendom has waned in the United States, Christian congregations across denominations have plateaued, and church membership has declined.

Over the last four decades or so, this decline has precipitated the production of literature dedicated to analyzing, debating, and critiquing seminary education. Meanwhile, congregations served by graduates of these seminaries have, for the most part, continued to decline in almost every measurable way. Institutions of theological education in America should take note of this because most were born of healthy and flourishing congregations, judicatories, and denominations. And because the health of these same denominations, judicatories, and congregations continues to wane, as they have been for the past forty years, it is only a matter of time before the seminaries themselves suffer (if they are not already suffering) the same institutional fate.

In Genesis 41, Pharaoh dreams of seven cows, sleek and fat coming out of the Nile River. As these fat cows graze contentedly among the reeds, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, come up out of the Nile after them, and stand beside them on the riverbank. And then the ugly, gaunt cows eat up the seven sleek, fat cows. The meaning of this dream was that a time of great ease and abundance would be followed by a time of hardship and famine, and the years of deprivation would be so severe that they would devour everything produced during the years of plenty. There is a lesson here, it seems, for seminary leaders and faculty members: The years of ease and abundance are over.

The healthy and flourishing Christian congregations that banded together to form most American seminaries have not remained healthy and flourishing. They can no longer support theological education institutions as they once did. Many no longer even desire to. As for the seminaries that have for generations been living off the riches of healthy and flourishing congregations, they shall experience institutional hardship and famine like never before. They need the support of the congregations they serve in order to survive, but all they have left are skinny cows!

The situation is, to be sure, complex. Yet questions about what seminaries do and how they do it, along with the long-standing criticisms and critiques that arise from disparate corners of the church, remain and must be taken seriously. These questions and concerns continue to be directed at the mission/focus of Christian seminaries in America and at the faculties that serve them. What follows is a representative sample of these criticisms from a spectrum of credible sources and in chronological order, spanning from 1964 to the recent past.

• "The crisis in theological education has arisen largely because the theological schools and the religious professionals find themselves more and more on the periphery of this fundamental conversation which is the mission and ministry of the church."[12]

• "The outcome of biblical studies in the academy is a trained incapacity to deal with the real problems of actual living persons in their daily lives."[13]

• "The fourfold pattern [of most seminary curricula], lacking any material unity of subject matter and norm, is responsible for one of the main elements taken for granted in present-day theological education: the independence and autonomy of the department areas, disciplines of the theological school. And because this promotes these areas as independent clusters of scholarship, it alienates them from both personal life and the church."[14]

• "We believe that as a result of the current confusion, much of the time and energy given to theological education is misdirected. Although we rejoice in the teaching of the Bible and church history, we believe that it is too much geared to interest in disciplinary scholarship and too little to the real needs of the church."[15]

• "Theological seminaries were originally chartered to prepare people to serve as parish pastors. Most Protestant congregations were organized to evangelize, to gather people together for the proclamation of the Word, for the administration of the Sacraments (ordinances), and to nurture the spiritual journey of people including children. Rarely were they organized to provide employment for the clergy."[16]

• "The natural evolution in self-image from a professional school to that of a graduate school also produces changes in the criteria for selecting members of the faculty. Gone are the days when a majority of the faculty were ministers who had spent fifteen or twenty years as parish pastors before joining the seminary faculty. The demand today is for scholarship, not parish experience. It is difficult to find a theological seminary today in which even one-third of the faculty have spent at least seven years as the senior minister of a congregation averaging seven hundred or more at worship. By contrast, it is rare to find the surgery department in a medical school staffed by persons who have not performed hundreds of complex surgical procedures."[17]

• "Modern scholarship seems to have given insufficient attention to the fact that in the first half of the nineteenth century American theologians were first preachers and pastors. We have tended, perhaps, to observe them through a twentieth-century lens that has detached theology from the pulpit, rather than through and eighteenth-century lens that typically combined preaching, the ministerial office, and the teaching of theology."[18]

• "The churches thought of seminaries as training schools for preachers. The larger academic culture with the rise of the culture of professionalism and modern research universities, saw seminaries as graduate schools with a theological specialization. The divide is now so wide that no single institution can serve both of these masters. Most have attempted a middle way, between the two publics, but with mixed results."[19]

• "The loss of the mainline churches in membership and the decline seen in other quantifiable data indicate that something is seriously wrong. The seminaries have to face the question of whether or not they are educating people with the ability to go out and build churches."[20]

• "[Seminary] teachers are also mostly separate from the sphere of public ministry. Instead of being theologically formative practitioners they are at best exemplary models of theological formation or professional exponents of practical theology. Their students are not coworkers in ministry whose learning is further stimulated through active service, but at best good novices gaining untested tools for future service. In such a setting, problems of relating the subjective and objective aspects of learning are bound to arise."[21]

One could address these observations, critiques, and complaints by treating them lightly, ignoring, or dismissing them altogether. After all, finding fault with seminaries and their graduates has been a regular armchair sport of the church for as long as these seminaries have been around, and, truth be told, congregations and judicatories can be quite myopic when it comes to thinking about best practices for forming pastors for ministry. As Linda Cannell observes,

> A commonly suggested antidote to the perceived problems of today's church is to develop leaders who know how to manage an organization and who communicate in an appealing fashion from the pulpit. As necessary as it is to have someone in a congregation who can assist with organizational matters, the more urgent need is for leaders who are able to assist congregations to understand and live out their identity as the people of God in the world.
>
> Today seminaries are under pressure from denominational leaders and congregations to train better leaders. However, the nature and role of leadership is distorted when churches seek to be successful or efficient rather than being the people of God. Churches seeking strong leaders who can create successful churches should

> always be unhappy with the products of seminaries. Churches who are simply seeking pastors who can function well (in preaching, teaching, relationships, office management) should likewise be unhappy with the products of seminaries. The seminary, as a functioning community of scholars, should provide assistance to the church as it seeks to embrace more biblically consistent understandings of leadership. Where there is lacking, the answer is not to create church-based seminaries *for the purpose of* creating strong leaders for successful churches. Nor is the answer for seminaries to enhance and enlarge functional aspects of the curriculum in order to develop the pastoral skills that many churches want. If the church has departed from the most basic descriptions of its character and purpose in Scripture, leaders will be in the undesirable position of trying to make an organization work that has departed from its function. [22]

Thus, the best approach for forming pastors for effective ministry does not consist of simply giving church folk what they say they want. Neither, however, does it mean ignoring their concerns about the states of their congregations, or about what they observe is wrong with seminaries and seminary education. Instead, the numerous and persistent observations, critiques, and complaints, as set forth above, should be viewed by seminary leaders and faculties as the full-blown arrival of the seven skinny cows on their campuses. If these numerous and gaunt bovines are not taken seriously—if something does not change for the better—they will devour every remaining resource the seminary has stored up from the years of ease and abundance. Given this state of affairs, what must seminaries now do?

Reenvisioning Theological Education

Robert Banks has articulated the need for a major re-thinking of theological education toward what he calls a "missional model." In *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, he reviews key themes in the current debates and examines how ministry formation took place during biblical times. This is the foundation for his model, which he then develops with the goal of providing a range of practical ways in which theological schools might move their present patterns of theological education in more holistic, practical, and especially missional directions.

In his investigation of the Scriptural material regarding the way in which theological formation took place during Bible times, he notes the following:

> There were, then, different levels and different circles within which formation for ministry took place in the biblical writings. Alongside the fundamental role played by the family and later by the school, and the largely nonformal preparation of village elders, there were the more specialized circles of priests, prophets, and the

wise. For all their differences these often exhibit some common elements:

• The main purpose of associating with a key figure was to collaborate in the active service of God.
• Associates of this figure attended or accompanied him, in some cases living with or near him.
• This involved a permanent or temporary break with their normal relationships and surroundings.
• Learning occurred in diverse settings through participant observation, nonformal discussion, action-reflection, and direct instruction.
• In some cases, successors emerged when the central figures passed on, whereas in others this was a by-product of the association.[23]

Important to remember is that in all this, Banks stresses that when Jesus chose the disciples, it was not preparation of the Twelve *for* mission that was uppermost in His mind, but *engagement* of the Twelve *in* mission.

All this has ramifications for the way in which a seminary should go about its business of theological education:

• It ought to comprehend the broader people of God not just as an elite cadre, though special attention should be paid to a core group and, to a lesser extent, to an intermediate group.
• It should orient itself primarily around "in-service" ministry activities, within which intellectual, spiritual, and practical concerns form a seamless whole.
• At its center should be a living and working partnership with an experienced person who, for different periods of time, offers his or her whole self to those in such a group.
• The break with home, occupation, and often family, involved in attending a seminary, or the residential requirements in extension centers, mirrors something of what we find in the biblical narratives. So does the general development of residential campuses, extension centers, and continuing education or distance-learning programs.
• The growing desire to have a stronger interconnection between the seminary and the church, and between study and practice, is well based.
• In a limited way echoes of Paul's collegial approach appear in the one-on-one or small-group academic mentoring of advanced students, who are regarded as junior members of the community of scholars.[24]

This "missional model" of theological education places the main emphasis for the student on hands-on partnership in ministry based on interpreting the Christian tradition and reflecting on practice with a strong spiritual and communal dimension. "On this view theological education is primarily though not exclusively concerned with actual *service*—informed and transforming—of the kingdom and therefore primarily focuses on acquiring cognitive, spiritual-moral, and practical obedience."[25]

Turning from the students' to the faculty's role, Banks reminds this group that as it was for Jesus with His disciples, so it must be for them. "It is through the sharing of a person's life as well as their beliefs that life-giving change comes to others," Banks notes. "Truth must be embodied as well as articulated, incarnated as well as revealed."[26] Therefore, central to this program is that those who lead and teach all live in the context of ministry, exercising their gifts both in churches and in the community. In this way they become role models for students of what to do and think, of practice as well as understanding. In other words, they incarnate their teaching in concrete service.

Banks' missional model of theological education thus calls for theological schools to (1) Induct students into a set of practices—intellectual, personal, and vocational—that will stand them in good stead for whatever God calls them to do and help them to do this creatively and appropriately; (2) Help students form a set of attitudes at the center of which is a hunger for reality in their relationship with God, self, and others, as well as in their ongoing work, and an ability to build community inside and outside the church; (3) Work to build a strong foundation for these practices and attitudes that are made up of a genuine understanding of the Christian tradition—biblical, historical, and theological—without which there is no base for the other two. These practices, attitudes and understandings will be most tightly woven together "through *learning-in-ministry* rather than *learning-for-ministry* or *learning-alongside-ministry*. A missional approach to theological education gives to all three the sharpest focus, and brings them into contact with one another in the most vital way. It is like the difference between merely studying a play, reading it together as an exercise, and actually rehearsing and presenting it on stage. While the first two both have their part to play, participants gain most from them when they are working towards an actual production."[27]

Reenvisioning Theological Education goes a long way toward addressing the disparate positions within the debate over the crisis in theological education and bringing them together in a coherent way. When and where faculty are engaged in real-world, real-time mission and ministry with students, true ministerial formation takes place, because all are actually engaged in the Commission to which the Lord of the church calls all of the church. This central missional focus will also be more likely to address the fragmentation in theological education than all of the other options for doing so that this body of literature presents—for when teachers and students are

engaged in mission, they give more of themselves to the task yet simultaneously learn to rely less on their own expertise and more on God than ever before.

Because what people tend to learn most is what the culture of an institution cultivates rather than what teachers teach, the missional model of theological education holds real promise for honest-to-goodness educational reform. The Spirit is always active where Christians are engaged in mission, and that has the potential to change the culture of even those schools that are least open to institutional change.

So then, given all of this, what might theological schools like those in our fellowship do going forward? Here are four sanctified suggestions:

Accept (at least some) responsibility

The situation is complex with many facets and faces, but seminaries have been given the primary responsibility for preparing and certifying pastors. Between 1996 (when I was first called to the faculty of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri), and 2013 (when I left the faculty to become a mission executive), my faculty colleagues and I sent out approximately ninety graduates per year to serve as pastors in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In other words, during my seventeen years as a teacher of future pastors, I saw approximately 1,500 Concordia graduates enter the LCMS ministerium as (in most cases) pastors of local congregations. Throughout this same time frame, unfortunately, the LCMS continued to decline in baptized membership, confirmed membership, average weekend attendance, and overall number of member congregations. While there are many reasons for this ongoing decline, certainly the Seminary needs to own at least part of the responsibility. Spiritual and/or numerical growth always happens by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Means of Grace. But pastors, it is argued, are stewards, or means, of the Means of Grace. Thus, when and where spiritual and/or numerical decline has become the general state of affairs, it can and will be argued that the church's leaders—her pastors—are not being as effective means of the Means of Grace as the church needs them to be.

This is how God's people see it: They look at the statistics and wonder what's broken. They see a seminary adding 1,500 pastors to the clergy roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod over a seventeen-year period, and over that same time frame they see all the "people" numbers continue to decline. It should come as no surprise, then, that criticisms will be leveled at that seminary's ministerial education and formation processes.[28]

As noted above, these criticisms are not unique to Concordia, the LCMS, or even American Lutheranism. Concerned Christians have been raising them for some time! It is high time, therefore, for seminaries and the churches that support them to own a portion of the responsibility for the current state of Christian congregations in North America. They must pledge to do whatever it takes to fix what can be fixed in timely, measurable ways. This is the *only* way their efforts at institutional change will be taken seriously.

The primary institutional focus of every seminary must be healthy and flourishing congregations

In other words, the "end product" of a seminary's formation for ministry program has to be more than "a really good guy." It has to be healthy and flourishing congregations. Really good students, really good graduates, and really good assignments/placements of graduates into churches are not enough. They are helpful, and usually necessary, but they are not enough, because a seminary's realm of responsibility and accountability now needs to extend way beyond these factors. At the end of every academic year, in a clear and public accounting to the church it serves, a seminary now must be able to point out to the church-at-large in clear and unambiguous ways how, where, and to what degree the congregations its graduates are serving are actually better off, healthier, and more flourishing congregations.

This ecclesial paradigm of seminary formation for ministry is directly related to the purpose of the church. Its focus is on the formation and transformation of congregations, and its outcome is to support and renew worship, community, and mission. In this way, theological education is in the business of helping the church to be more faithful as a People of God, more spiritual as a Body of Christ, and more incarnational as the Spirit's Temple. Linda Cannell further explicates the rationale behind this approach to seminary education:

> First, the nature, identity, and purpose of the church constitute the starting point. Second, theological education is concerned with the formation and transformation of the church (i.e., the primary focus is not on the development of the students as potential and present leaders of the church, but on the development of the church). Third, theological education is an extension of the church's teaching ministry. Fourth, ecclesial theological education is an alternative to both the academic and clerical approaches to ministry development. Most notably, the ecclesial paradigm posits that the Christian community is fundamentally responsible for the educational task, not individual theologians. Theologians are not removed from the process, but they work in dialogue with the ecclesial community, as part of it . . . [29]

Adopt and implement a missional curriculum that encourages and rewards learning-in-ministry

Here Robert Banks's *Reenvisioning Theological Education* comes back into the picture as a resource for providing a blueprint toward institutional reform. Latching onto the formation for ministry practices of Jesus, Banks asks,

> Is it really possible to develop a capacity for action that is abstracted from engaging in action? Action will be devalued as a route to learning so long as it is only talked about and not engaged in. . . . It must become part of the circle of theological reflection, and such reflection has greater

> depth when one is actively involved. . . . So long as theological reflection is not an organic part of the whole curriculum, the dichotomy between theory and practice remains partially in place.[30]

For a missional learning-in-ministry curriculum to succeed, however, seminary faculty must have more exposure to certain ministry or mission situations. While the typical rank-and-file member of a theological faculty may prefer to be oriented primarily toward academic undertakings, it is now essential that he be encouraged and rewarded to gain greater ministry or mission experience. The ways in which faculty could develop their skills as reflective practitioners are numerous, and Banks provides a list of examples,[31] from becoming part of a pastoral or ministry team in a local church to teaching and researching in a developing world college, from working with a community-oriented group in an urban setting to helping plant a church in a new area or population group, from living for a time among the poor, marginal, or disadvantaged in one's own city to serving as a Christian consultant to a business or other market-place institution.

Again, as Banks asserts,

> In the long term, there is need for more than an immersion or short-term experience of mission. This has most force when it is an enduring and integral dimension of a person's teaching, and is valued and regarded by their institution as much as research—indeed, when it is demanded as part of their *intellectual* contribution. Such involvement broadens and deepens our understanding of our culture, raises issues that require serious reflection, and forces us to find new resources from the Christian tradition. It should also become an essential part of theological institutions' wider *social* and *cultural* mission.[32]

Choose deep change instead of slow death

Every seminary is responsible, to a certain degree, for the health and vitality of the congregations its graduates serve. American Christianity is in decline, and if theological schools do not soon take steps to reinvent themselves in ways that redress this decline, these same schools will descend, irrevocably, into irrelevancy, and the church will find new approaches for identifying, forming, and calling her next generation of pastors. The important choice that confronts all of these seminaries, therefore, is the choice between deep change and slow death.[33]

According to organizational behavior and human resource management expert, Robert Quinn, organizations (like seminaries) are based on systems of external and internal expectations. *External* expectations are the product that the organization's external constituency demands from the institution and may have even instituted the organization to provide in the first place. *Internal* expectations are the formal and informal routines, procedures, rules, and/or regulations that the organization devised for itself to make itself efficient and/or effective in providing the product that the external constituency demands. As time goes by, however, the organization's

(seminary's) routine patterns move it toward decay and stagnation. The organization (seminary) loses alignment with the changing, external realities within which its external constituency must now effectively operate and thrive. As a result, the organization begins to lose the trust, loyalty, and support of its external constituency and, metaphorically, starts to experience the ravenous onslaught of the seven skinny cows.

When internal and external alignment is lost, the organization (seminary) faces a choice: either adapt or take the road to slow death. Usually, the organization (seminary) can be renewed, re-energized, or made effective again only if some leader is willing to take some big risks by stepping outside the well-defined boundaries and away from the safety net of the organization's (seminary's) standard operating procedures. To bring about deep change, people must "suffer" the risks.

It may be risky to say, but speaking as a part of the LCMS, I am convinced that our seminaries exist, primarily, to facilitate an increase in the number of healthy and flourishing LCMS congregations. In order to have healthy and flourishing LCMS congregations that are able to thrive in the current multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, pluralistic, postmodern secular contexts, each seminary must prepare its students to be leaders who are cross-culturally savvy theologians willing to grapple with cultural diversity, missionaries who measure communication not by what is said but by what is heard, and leaders who, in relationship, serve to lead.

Seminaries can and should be places where leaders of all kinds, and at all different levels of church life, are cultivated to intentionally engage in the mission of God. This means expanding a seminary's online offerings, setting up as many new sites or extension centers as possible, dispersing faculty and staff for seasons of time, and ensuring everyone at a seminary learns to lead and manage an institution that will have a broader footprint.

Traditional means of theological education, especially residential models, are facing extreme challenges. There will always be a place for residential education in forming ministers, missionaries, and scholars for the church, but I've seen, and become convinced, that "learning in ministry" is the best way to raise up and form faithful and fruitful leaders for God's church and His mission.

ENDNOTES

[1] See Peter Steinke, *A Door Set Open* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2010), 60–61. Here, Steinke presents a compelling picture of what a healthy and flourishing congregation looks like. He states, "Expansion is not the sole gauge of mission orientation. One problem with this thinking is the belief that, for congregations, all things are equal. But congregations are not in the same place, same stage, or same circumstances. That's not reality. Best-selling author Kathleen Norris talks about her old Presbyterian congregation, Hope Church, in Hope, South Dakota. Both the community of Hope and Hope Church are paradoxes. Although dying, they are, in Norris's words, 'beautifully alive.' The vitality is a result of an unflinching refusal to despair. Due to population depletion, the continuous flight of youth to urban areas, and the sheer isolation geographically, numerical growth is not possible. Despair? According to Norris, the people refuse its presence. The congregation actively participates in reducing world hunger and ranks high in percentage giving among Presbyterians in South Dakota. . . . 'Their challenge is to go on living thankfully, contributing liberally, and living graciously.' Quality

can be a measure of mission, too. Many churches like Hope will not grow. Some are hospice cases. But, not one of them is outside the realm of mission. I want to underscore that growth, as significant as it is for mission, does not alone define what mission is."

[2] Frederick Schmidt, "Is It Time to Write the Eulogy?: The Future of Seminary Education," *Patheos*, 21 March 2011, https://www.patheos.com/resources/additional-resources/2011/03/is-it-time-to-write-the-eulogy-frederick-schmidt-03-21-2011.

[3] Schmidt.

[4] Schmidt.

[5] The "pastors, missionaries, and leaders" that this paper refers to are not three different kinds of church workers but three accurate ways of describing every pastoral candidate that a seminary forms and certifies for ministry. This distinction is important and reflects the "post-church" or "post-Christendom" cultural reality that Christian congregations in North America must now "be the Church" in, and the kind of theological and spiritual leadership they need in order to faithfully and effectively do so.

[6] Jeffrey Miller, "Demographics and Transforming Congregations." *Issues in Christian Education* 45 (Fall 2011): 7.

[7] Terry Tieman, "How Revitalization Can Happen." *Issues in Christian Education* 45 (Fall 2011): 18.

[8] "Christendom" can be rightly seen as a cultural reality and perspective that facilitates the church's posture of supposed cultural hegemony in Western culture.

[9] George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1998), 26.

[10] Barna, 27.

[11] Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1998), 23.

[12] Gibson Winter, "Theological Schools: Partners in the Conversation," in *The Making of Ministers*, ed. Keith R. Bridston and Dwight W. Culver (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), 157–158.

[13] Walter Wink, *The Bible in Human Transformation: Toward a New Paradigm for Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 6.

[14] Edward Farley, *Theologia* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 109.

[15] John C. Hough and John B. Cobb, Jr., *Christian Identity and Theological Education* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 17–18.

[16] Lyle E. Schaller, *Reflections of a Contrarian* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 173.

[17] Schaller, 179.

[18] James E. Bradley, "The Nineteenth Century" in *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition*, ed. D. G. Hart and R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 167.

[19] Gabriel Fackre, "Educating the Church" in *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition*, ed. D. G. Hart and R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 278–279.

[20] Leith, 21.

[21] Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 147.

[22] Linda Cannell, *Theological Education Matters* (Newburgh, IN: EDCOT Press, 2006), 260.

[23] Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 92–93.

[24] Banks, 126.

[25] Banks, 144, italics in the original.

[26] Banks, 172.
[27] Banks, 226–227, italics in the original.
[28] It must be mentioned here that since my time at Concordia, the seminary has worked to expand its "learning-in-ministry" offerings. The Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program teaches and trains local leaders to serve in specific kinds of local ministries. The Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS) teaches and trains local Spanish speaking pastors for ministry in their unique contexts. The Ethnic Immigrant Institute for Theology (EIIT) forms first-generation ethnic immigrants for ministry in their unique contexts. These "distance," "learning-in-ministry" programs are bearing good fruit. In the Minnesota South District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, just about all of the new ministries and new church starts are being led by students who are enrolled in these "non-traditional" seminary programs. In fact, all the district's truly multi-ethnic congregations are currently being led by EIIT students or graduates!
[29] Linda Cannell, *Theological Education Matters* (Newburgh, IN: EDCOT Press, 2006), 275.
[30] Banks, 61.
[31] Banks, 185
[32] Banks, 185, italics in the original.
[33] The unavoidable choice between deep change and slow death is presented and explicated at length in Robert Quinn, *Deep Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996).

The Challenges of Distance Theological Education[1]

Douglas L. Rutt

Abstract

Distance models of theological education are here to stay. As a result of the pandemic, many seminaries, institutions and faculty members that approached it with derision, or at least a high degree of skepticism, were forced to experiment with distance models, making the best of it with the technology at hand. This has meant that more and more theological educators have had experience with distrance learning and bring to the debate new experiences and insights regarding its pros and cons. While distance learning is here to stay, it is no universal remedy for the ministerial training needs of the church. However, those interested in moving to distance learning models must do so with a clear picture of both the significant challenges and the opportunities.

I. Introduction

Distance theological education[2] at times and among certain groups has been promoted as a panacea for solving the changing ministry needs of the church in today's world. However, my forty-year history of working with and studying a variety of models that have evolved through the years, even going back to early experiments and movements that emerged in Central America in the 1960s, has made it abundantly clear that distance learning models pose significant challenges as well. While there are compelling examples of how distance learning has benefited the church and her mission, one should not make the mistake of oversimplifying the barriers or difficulties

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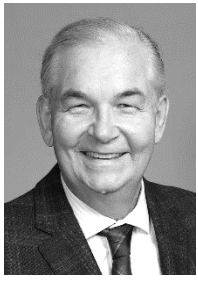

Rev. Dr. Douglas L. Rutt has served in international missions for almost forty years, having moved to Guatemala with his family in 1983. He taught missiology at Concordia Theological Seminary for over twelve years and for several years he was a guest professor for Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Besides his pastoral experience in Southern Minnesota, he was the Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Executive Director of the International Division of Lutheran Hour Ministries, and, since 2018, was Provost at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. He retired from full-time ministry this year but continues to teach, speak, and write. He holds an MDiv and PhD from Concordia Theological Seminary. ruttd@csl.edu

that distance learning presents if one endeavors to pursue it in a responsible and legitimate manner.

When considering the title of this paper, "The Challenges of Distance Theological Education," we might consider at least two perspectives. From one angle, we can look at the *complexities and difficulties* that non-traditional programs of theological education face. For example, one can critique distance programs in terms of how well they are administered, how well they prepare participants for ministry, how credible they are in the eyes of stakeholders, how efficient and useful they are in meeting the needs of the church, how they provide for theological formation, and what difficulties participants face along the way. These are important questions, and I will address some of them here.

Alternatively, one can see this title in a slightly different light: "The Challenges of Distance Theological Education" can be seen in terms of the question, In what ways do the non-residential, non-traditional models challenge the assumptions, values, pedagogic methodologies and results of the traditional, residential seminary model of ministerial formation? That is to say, What, if anything, do the non-residential programs of theological education have to teach those of us involved in more traditional, residential institutions? I think we must look at this theme from both perspectives, for while I will readily admit that there are problems, questions, and issues to be addressed in the non-traditional training programs I have seen and experienced,[3] I am also convinced that the proponents of these alternative programs[4] have raised some important considerations that anyone interested in well-rounded, functional ministerial formation must take seriously. This is especially true when considering the missional context in which the church lives.

II. Debate Concerning Purpose and Goals of Theological Education

Since the early 1980s, there has been a great deal of debate, especially among mainline Protestants in the United States, over the nature, purpose, and goals of theological education. This discussion was launched in large part by the 1983 publication of Edward Farley's work, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*.[5] Farley pointed to the fact that the older conception of theology as *habitus* had been lost somewhat. He claimed that there was a lack of coherence in theological education due to the fragmentation of curriculum into the various disciplines and sub-disciplines, each often pursuing its specialty independently from the others. He claimed that theological education has evolved, especially since the time of the implementation of Schleiermacher's ideas at the University of Berlin, so that today, at least among mainline Protestants in the United States, there is little that holds it together:

> The divinity approach is largely replaced with a plurality of "theological sciences" requiring specialist teachers. The shift was not from piety to learning. A learned ministry was never seriously questioned in many of the church traditions. The shift was from one meaning of learning to another, from study which deepens heartfelt

> knowledge of divine things to scholarly knowledge of relatively discrete theological sciences.[6]

The impact of these developments on the ministry, according to Farley, was that "the direction is . . . from office to profession."[7] For confessional Lutheran theological educators with a high view of the office of the public ministry, such a move is a concern.

Daniel Aleshire, the longtime executive director of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, brings the ongoing reflection about the direction of theological education in light of the church's current needs to the present day in his extended essay published under the title, *Beyond Profession: The Next Future of Theological Education*.[8] He documents the evolution among many seminaries in the United States to what has become a self-understanding of their mission as that of providing specialized, academic training coupled with a view of the goal being "profession," akin to law schools and medical schools. He asserts that toward the end of the twentieth century the need for attention to *spiritual* concerns on the part of some of the institutions was called into question. He argues, "The introduction of curricular attention to personal and spiritual formation was contested because it was not considered the proper work of graduate schools or because the schools did not have the educational practices that this addition would require."[9]

Hence, the title of his book, *Beyond Profession*. His concern is that theological education should be more than mere intellectual knowledge and professional training, and even more than the "joy of salvation." He argues that it should have a holistic goal that includes knowledge, surely, but also affective and behavioral aspects that come about by the handing down of a long tradition. This will factor into the concerns often expressed over how to account for the formative dimension at a distance. Aleshire puts it this way:

> The wisdom of God and the ways of God—this longing for and loving of God, this understanding that accrues from the centuries and cultures that people have longed for God—are *fashioned from intellectual, affective, and behavioral understanding*—these very different ways of comprehending, leaning into, and learning. The goal of theological education, however, is not the joy of knowing God and the things of God, satisfying as that may be, but *spiritual and moral maturity, relational integrity, knowledge of the Scripture and tradition, and the capacity to exercise religious leadership.*[10]

This decades-long conversation, I believe, has been helpful to traditional seminaries as it has sought to restore what we would consider to be a fundamental goal, perhaps *the* fundamental goal, of theological education: the formation of a *habitus practicus* shaped by the theology of the cross in community. It has served to help theological educators reflect upon the place of theology in its primary sense in theological education[11] and has caused us to consider the important question of coherence in our seminary programs.[12] Moreover, this discussion is important because

many critiques leveled against distance theological education have to do with the question of *formation* and how it should best be provided for.

III. Contextual Concerns

Many of these questions raised today in North American seminaries have been under discussion for a long time by missiologists, especially during the past one hundred years. As missionaries in the twentieth century went out from western lands to proclaim the Gospel, they were faced with the immediate problem of how to form workers to minister to the numerous new congregations. The need to prepare local pastors was obvious. It was only logical that early missionaries believed the education of local clergy could best be accomplished by establishing institutions similar to the ones they had attended. Therefore, residential seminaries were set up to duplicate, in as much as possible, the design, methodology, and curriculum of the seminaries in the United States and Europe.

The results, however, in terms of preparing effective local, autochthonous ministries, were sometimes viewed as less than satisfactory. Although the academic level of these institutions was frequently quite high, the graduating students sometimes did not satisfy the ministry needs of the church. In some cases, students became deculturated from their context of origin after four to five years of life in a residential seminary so that they were incapable (either psychologically, culturally, or socioeconomically) of returning to the context of from which they had come.[13] Others grew intellectually, but it became apparent that some did not have a vocation for ministry and used their training to obtain positions in the secular world.[14] In addition, the cost of operating the residential seminaries in areas where the church was still in its formative stages and relatively small was beyond the reach of the nascent churches. To illustrate, in 1986 Jose Fuliga, former president of the Philippine Lutheran Church, reported that the budget of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in the Philippines was about $220,000 annually (the equivalent of $604,000 today), yet it was graduating an average of only 1.5 students per year.[15]

Although the academic level of these institutions was frequently quite high, the graduating students sometimes did not satisfy the ministry needs of the church. In some cases, students became deculturated from their context of origin after four to five years of life in a residential seminary so that they were incapable (either psychologically, culturally, or socioeconomically) of returning to the context of from which they had come.

Moreover, many felt that some candidates for ministry were not credible in their home contexts. José Fuliga saw this happening in the Philippines, for example, when he observed that, sometimes, theological education had not prepared the men most likely to be respected in their communities for ministry. Rather, he states, "'the grave men of the church'" and "'the natural teachers'" are co-opted by "'either a foreigner

or someone who has come with a foreign education.'"[16] These kinds of concerns gave rise to the desire for other models of theological education in mission settings, especially what today we would call distance models.

While finances played a role, it was also maintained by the proponents of alternative approaches to theological education that the non-formal, non-traditional models that are now being utilized in many parts of the world have not been merely the result of a lack of resources or the result of a desire to do theological education more quickly and cheaply. Rather, in many cases the alternatives were born of a desire to meet the needs of the church for effective ministers and to prepare apt candidates for ministry in ways more aligned with the contexts in which they will serve.

IV. The Rise of Distance Theological Education

While there are a variety of non-traditional methodologies through which theological education can be carried out, a model that has had considerable impact is theological education by extension. It was begun when the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala noted difficulties with their residential seminary similar to those mentioned above. Although most of the Presbyterian churches were located in the western highlands, the seminary was located in Guatemala City. And, while most of the members of the church were from the Mayan-Quiché people, the student body of their residential seminary was made up mainly of Spanish speaking *Ladinos*, who were little inclined and ill-prepared to go to the impoverished rural areas to live and work among the semi-literate church population.[17]

In 1963, the Presbyterian Church decided to bring theological education to where most of the church membership was, and the seminary was moved to the small town of San Felipe in the mountains of the department of Retalhuleu. It was also recognized that a different teaching methodology would have to be employed if the new program was going to meet the ministry needs of the church. There was a shortage of pastors, and a strategy for enrolling more students was needed. To meet this need, the seminary implemented an extension model so that students could remain in their contexts with their families and keep their occupations while still pursuing a theological education.

Thus, the movement called Theological Education by Extension (TEE) was launched.[18] The three founding faculty members of the new seminary in Guatemala shared their insights with other Christian missionaries and churches around the world, and the movement spread and grew tremendously. It is difficult to know the number of TEE or distance programs around the world used by virtually every denomination today, but there are hundreds if not thousands.

As mentioned above, the design of non-traditional programs has not been viewed solely in pragmatic terms. It is not mainly a matter of doing theological education more cheaply, more easily, or with less work; rather, advocates have pointed out that there were and are certain pedagogical and theological presuppositions underlying such approaches.

Pedagogically, most non-formal programs of theological education have sought to incorporate the latest insights from the field of adult education, or andragogy. One can debate the validity or appropriateness of some of these philosophies of education; however, concepts such as the "action/reflection/action" pattern, and the insights of

educators such as Paulo Freire, Robert Carkhuff, Arthur Combs, Malcolm Knowles, and Jean Piaget are often cited as vital to distance education models.[19]

The early models of distance education were very simple.[20] They usually included three dimensions: (1) Self-study materials that the student completes at home; (2) in-ministry activities that the student is expected to carry out; and (3) regular "seminars" at an "extension center" in which the students can reflect both upon what they have learned cognitively and how it applies to their ministry experience. Today, the third component, the "extension center," has been essentially replaced with online means such as digital discussion boards, chat rooms, and/or streaming video sessions. Yet, those regular times of meeting together, even if only virtually, continue to play an important role. Proponents of non-formal theological education are convinced that the *processes* of theological education are just as important as the content and that the experiential dimension is essential.[21] They propose that such factors have been ignored for too long in many residential seminaries. Most distance ministerial training programs emphasize the need to be intimately connected to the church so that theological *formation* can take place in a dynamic of engagement with the people of God in their regular lives.

This emphasis on the experiential has a theological rationale. Charles Wood, in his book *Vision and Discernment*, expresses the validity of how earlier theologians conceptualized theological study.[22] He points to Luther, who refused to draw a dichotomy between theory and practice. Luther recognized the experiential dimension in the making of a theologian when he spoke of *tentatio* or *Anfechtung.* He said that only in *tentatio* does one really learn the meaning of Scripture: "I did not learn my divinity at once, but was constrained by my temptations to search deeper and deeper; for no man, without trials and temptations, can attain a true understanding of the Holy Scriptures."[23] This *tentatio* is a real experience of struggle and temptation that can only take place in the arena of life and ministry. Any purely speculative or theoretical approach to theology was deficient, according to Luther. One of his most powerful sayings for the young pastor or student experiencing trial was, "*Vivendo, immo moriendo et damnando fit theologus, non intelligendo, legendo aut speculando*"[24]: In the trials of life and ministry experience is the theologian made.[25]

The nature and process for theological formation is important to the debate concerning residential versus distance theological education because much of the concern revolves around the issue of theological formation, how and where it happens.

V. "Challenges" to Traditional Programs

As mentioned above, distance or extension theological education has sometimes been promoted as the universal remedy for all the ills and problems associated with traditional means of providing effective and faithful ministry in the Christian Church. It is widely recognized, however, that there are problems and difficulties to be overcome in non-residential programs. It is also true that a polarization has taken place between theological educators from the residential seminaries and those who work with and advocate non-formal, alternative models. This polarization has been due, in part at least, to the harsh criticisms that the early proponents of distance or "contextual" models were leveling against the residential seminaries. Some would passionately

assert that the residential seminaries were "stifling, impeding, and thwarting" the growth of the Church. Today, however, most recognize that the non-formal options for contextual theological education should not be seen as replacements, but rather as complementary aspects to residential seminaries.

In summary, I would like to reiterate some of the advantages or positive aspects of certain non-formal or non-traditional programs. There are ways in which alternative models "challenge" our assumptions and methodologies. Some of those have become apparent in the earlier discussion of pedagogical theory, methodology, candidate selection practices, etc.

Conducted in Context

Distance theological education does not decontextualize learners the way residential programs might. Distance programs can allow participants to learn and grow without removing them, whether geographically, psychologically, or socially, so far from their contexts that they have great difficulty returning to the places where they are expected to serve. For example, the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology, a distance program leading to ordination in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, makes it possible for the natural spiritual leadership of a particular ethnic and/or linguistic group to remain in their context throughout their theological educational program. Their context is *missional*. If a candidate for ministerial leadership were to be removed from the lives of their nascent flock for four years or more, it is easier for the flock to become scattered. The proponents of distance theological education would say that the goal of theological education is to form pastors and deaconesses who are prepared to minister faithfully among their own people in contexts that vary vastly from the sheltered walls of residential theological seminaries.

Provides for the Experiential Dimension

Good distance programs rely more heavily on the dynamic of engagement in the training processes. This can have the effect of deepening the student's understanding of theological concepts as they see how they are related more directly to the needs and problems of people in real-life ministry situations.[26]

The question of "formation" is of paramount importance in relation to the role of experience in making a theologian since how and where formation takes place is probably the most contentious point of debate between proponents of residential and distance programs. Where does the formation of a theological *habitus* take place? How is it best provided for? Proponents of non-formal programs would say that it takes place best in the context of ministry, where the students can wrestle with the tough questions and issues that one involved in ministry must confront during his or her time of study. Others would say that there are certain important formative processes that can best be carried out through the community life of a seminary, which includes plenty of time for interaction among teachers and students—most importantly, through the worship life of the seminary community, as all are brought together in God's presence to hear His Word and receive the Sacraments. This is, I believe, the crux of matter regarding the question of non-residential versus residential theological

education. In other words, are theologians formed by and in the church or by and in the school? The answer is no doubt both. Both contexts for ministerial formation are valid and legitimate, although they are different.

Cost Effective

A pragmatic point is that distance theological education can be cost effective. Instead of one hundred students moving themselves and their families to a centralized location, for example, one teacher can connect virtually with students in various locations of life and ministry. Instead of maintaining a large, expensive-to-maintain, centralized campus, the facilities of local churches and other venues can be put to use for distance learning opportunities.

Theological Education Available to More Students

This is related to the previous point. Non-formal programs can make theological education accessible to many more students. Just as the invention of the printing press is said to have brought about a democratization of knowledge during Luther's time, and that modern digital technology brings about another revolution in terms of the dissemination of knowledge to all, some argue that distance models can bring about a democratization of theological education.[27] Not all distance students will go on to prepare themselves for the pastoral or diaconal ministry, but it has been seen that many who might not otherwise be able to receive advanced theological education are afforded the possibility of doing so through a variety of non-formal models.

Supports Ministerial Candidate Selection Processes

Many of the "grave men" of the church and the "natural teachers" can participate while maintaining their relationships with their communities. Learning about potential candidate's community relationships actually helps measure their attitude and aptitude for real-life ministry as part of the application and admissions screening, when oftentimes that is not fully known until after graduation and placement.

Open Ended

A non-formal program is more open ended. Participants can embark upon a study program more easily because they do not have to go through the disruption of moving themselves and their families to a centralized location. There is the personal risk and significant expense involved with uprooting oneself, and sometimes an entire family. If a student comes to the realization that pastoral ministry or diaconal ministry is not for him or her, or if the church should conclude that the candidate is not fit for ministry, it is much easier for the individual to gracefully withdraw from a distance program. It is not considered a mistake, nor does it create a stressful and possibly embarrassing situation for the student who withdraws from his or her studies if it does not involve having to return home after "failing" at the seminary.

VI. Disadvantages, Problems, and Challenges of Distance Theological Education

At the same time, several concerns and issues have been raised by those both inside and outside of the alternative models. These challenges must be carefully considered.

Lack of Credibility

In many places, the distance programs of theological education have not achieved the credibility necessary for them to be fully recognized by the participants and/or the church. One of the reasons, perhaps, is that much of the older leadership in churches has come from the residential model, and they view the new model as inferior or second-rate.[28] There is a common misconception that an inherent requirement for public ministry is a residential seminary degree. For many people, the unmarked meaning of the word "ordained" is "graduated from a four-year residential seminary." However, over the course of history there have been many paths to ordained ministry, and the current model of the theological seminary is a relatively new development.

That is not to say the four-year seminary model is not a good development. I would hope that it has been a positive development, as we constantly attempt to improve how those who are called and ordained to proclaim the Gospel will be prepared for this office within increasingly complex and challenging contexts. The same goes for deaconess training and their valid and legitimate call. Ordination, especially from a Lutheran theological perspective, has never been simply a matter of graduation from a residential seminary. Yet, with all the talk about the insights of adult education theory and methodology, contextualization and the importance of the experiential dimension notwithstanding, the alternative models continue to suffer from a lack of credibility, especially if they are not accredited.

Lack of Accreditation

Related to the lack of credibility is the practical concern for accreditation. Our distance students, especially those who come from underrepresented ethnic or linguistic groups, desire to achieve an accredited academic degree of some kind. The fact that some distance theological education programs are not accredited has undermined their credibility, and students sometimes feel limited in their potential for leadership in the church, even if duly ordained or installed, because they do not have an accredited theological degree.

Lack of Administrative Support

There are many difficulties inherent in the administration of such a program. Some of this is because students are separated from one another and from the headquarters of the program, sometimes by great distances. Students often participate irregularly. Probably most distance theological education programs suffer from

understaffing. Non-formal programs of theological education require a great deal of administrative support in areas such as the collection of fees, management of budget, student records, scheduling of classes, production of materials, preparation of faculty for online teaching, course development, etc. Often these are not adequately provided for, and the programs suffer from a lack of credibility as a result.

Overuse of Adjunct Faculty

It has been the experience of many distance programs that a greater proportion of the teaching faculty is made up of adjunct instructors, who are not fully connected to the institution providing the courses. The use of adjunct faculty can surely be a great blessing, yet students in distance programs would benefit from greater exposure to the regular faculty of an institution.

Course Development

Often, a regular faculty member simply does not have the time to fully develop an online course. It requires a different approach to teaching/learning, and a great deal of preparation up front. In the Auburn study *(Not) Being There*, researchers found that two of the greatest challenges for schools in carrying out distance theological education, were, first, the demands it puts on a faculty member in terms of *time,* and, second, the training that is necessary to properly develop and teach a course. Seventy-five percent of those surveyed said that the "amount of time to teach and assess online students was more or far more than the time it took to teach and assess students in a traditional classroom."[29] This is a factor that administrators often overlook or fail to account for when making teaching assignments. Any faculty member who has taught extensively in a face-to-face classroom will report that it is much less work than developing and teaching a course online.

Time Management

We have also found that time management, both on the part of the students and the instructor, can be a major challenge. Life can easily get in the way for both, and soon a week or two can have passed without students and/or faculty members checking into the LMS to respond to posts and questions or to review assignments. This is a serious issue, and it is important for an institution to enforce a certain discipline for the sake of the students and the legitimacy of the program. It is only to be expected that participation in a non-formal, distance theological education program often presents a great challenge for students. They must somehow balance family life, occupation, and ministry responsibilities with a program of studies. Sometimes family responsibilities and work duties make it difficult for students to find time for their studies, and they simply cannot do it, or they do not have the time to do the work well.

Distance Learning is Not for Everyone

Distance and non-formal education is not for those who do not possess the self-discipline, study habits, or internal self-motivation to complete their assignments and projects in a timely manner. A student who does not respond to emails, text messages, or phone calls will have difficulty in the more flexible and somewhat less-structured environment. Cultural differences can play into this as well. Someone from a more communal culture will benefit a great deal from opportunities for "personal" interactions, such as video conferencing with the entire cohort. Some of the distance programs I have been involved with are almost exclusively text based, with the major mode of interaction being extensive readings and writing. That mode of communication and engagement is not adequate for everyone, and some cannot thrive in such an impersonal environment.

Lack of "Social Presence"

The fact that the student is doing a great part of his or her learning at a distance from the professor means that ongoing opportunities for dialogue, evaluation, and mentoring can be more difficult to maintain. This can make it difficult for the teacher to accurately assess the progress of the student in a holistic way. It is important for those contemplating the implementation of a distance learning program to account for this factor and build in ways to provide for it. All too often, however, it is not adequately addressed, and the course of study becomes little more than a "correspondence course." Some form of social presence must be intentionally built into distance programs to provide for a more holistic preparation. John Cartwright, Gabriel Etzel, Christopher Jackson, and Timothy Paul Jones in their book, *Teaching the World: Foundations for Online Theological Education*, readily admit the loss of social presence in online learning. Responding to certain scholars who have critiqued the validity of online learning, they state. "[T]hey are correct in their concern that certain opportunities for formation are lost in online formats—opportunities like shared meals, prayers, and worship." Thus, they assert, "Theological institutions, accrediting agencies, and potential students should attend to this application when making decisions about the place of online formats in theological education."[30] In spite of these observations, the authors propose ways to address the need for social presence in a constructive way.

Lack of Formation in Community

Related to this is the question of formation discussed above. How is the kind of formation described by Martin Luther to be provided for when the students are not afforded opportunities for ongoing contact with their professors and fellow students, and are not brought together regularly, daily, in Word and prayer? This lack of community is lamented by one professor from Iliff School of Theology:

> Once we began teaching online, we had less control of the formative environment of our students. They are in their own

> community and not as immersed in our community and culture as a school. We've had to wrestle with this more; they aren't getting the Iliff culture through the informal and implicit curriculum in the same way they used to.[31]

Another states,

> Personal relationships are more difficult. . . . It doesn't lend itself to people coming by your office, or to following you down the hall. There's a good part of seminary education that happens in private, face-to-face [interactions]. Our students feel free when they see you in person. You're their professor and they want to talk with you and pray with you. The more intimate education moment that takes place in a residential student, that's missing.[32]

Without a doubt, the sentiments of the above professors are valid and important. Indeed, the Association of Theological Schools seeks to measure and assess what it calls "co-curricular activities" that are a part of the seminary experience, like chapel, but also sports, informal gatherings, clubs, debates, talent shows, etc., all of which contribute in some way to building a sense of community and formation.

Feeling a Loss of Control

Related to the above is the concern often voiced by teachers that they do not have adequate control over the learning experience. The students are more on their own to carry out their studies and sometimes need additional help that is not readily available. The use of local pastors as facilitators helps greatly to reduce this tension, but experience in using local pastors as mentors has been uneven: sometimes very effective and sometimes not so much.

Relationship to the Church as a Whole

Some fear that those who participate exclusively in distance programs of theological education will not grow the kind of bonds and relationships with their fellow students that the residential students have the opportunity to experience. This could result in less of a commitment to the church body as a whole. The student may not experience the same connection with the wider church if his or her formation takes place almost exclusively in a local ministry.

VII. Conclusion

As can be seen, there are challenges and difficulties to be faced. The non-formal, non-traditional programs that have been implemented around the world are not the universal remedy that some proponents claim they might be. A good distance theological education program requires a commitment to invest time and money to carry it out in a responsible way. It is not an "easy out," either for students or for the

institutions. Understanding the limitations of distance education is essential, just as it is essential to understand the limitations of residential theological formation.

However, the proliferation of extension and distance models demonstrates that the church and her institutions see value in them for meeting the challenges of providing ministerial formation for the wide variety of contexts in which Christian ministry takes place. The pandemic has only accelerated the use of distance models and has forced institutions, faculty, and staff members who may have been dragging their feet to find ways to carry out their mission in a new way. Distance theological education is not going away. The challenges that have been discussed here can, in fact, be met in order to responsibly and effectively offer distance education.

There are caveats and issues, though, that need to be explored further and addressed. More study is needed, especially regarding the impact of the pandemic on distance theological education, as well as honest assessments of strengths and weaknesses. As Richard Ascough remarks, "Good pedagogy requires an awareness of the opportunities and limitations of the mode of education."[33] This goes for any mode of education. My hope is that we can evaluate and appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of all models and continue the process of improving theological education, whether it be the residential seminary, a distance model, a combination, or some other way that we have forgotten (or have yet to discover) for the preparation of men and women to serve faithfully in the mission and ministry of the church.

ENDNOTES

[1] This is a significantly revised and updated version of a paper delivered at the World Seminaries Conference of the International Lutheran Council in Canoas, Brazil. Douglas L. Rutt, "The Challenges of 'Non-Seminary' Training" in *Preparing Lutheran Pastors for Today: ILC - Theological Seminaries World Conference* (Canoas, Brazil: Editoria da ULBRA, 2006), 293–316.

[2] When one thinks of distance learning today, it is usually assumed that we are talking about *online* distance learning. Obviously, digital educational technology has advance amazingly during that past twenty years, and online platforms such as the various learning management systems (LMS), video conferencing (e.g., Zoom), and digitalized library resources have become pretty much ubiquitous in distance programs. The discourse today usually revolves around *online* distance education, represented by the acronym ODE. For this paper, I mostly use the more generic term, *distance learning*. Moreover, I prefer *learning* over *education* because of my own commitments to seeing education as a process and as learner *focused.*

[3] My personal experience includes involvement in distance theological education programs in Latin America, membership in the LCMS's original DELTO (Distance Education Leading to Ordination) steering committee, the SMP (Specific Ministry Pastor) steering committee at its inception, and several years as dean for distance learning at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. I have also taught online courses for Grand Canyon University.

[4] Educators like to speak of three categories when describing educational programs: *formal*, *informal*, and *non-formal*. *Formal* education refers to organized institutional education recognized by the society in which it exists. It is preparation that takes place in institutions set up to offer programmatic instruction leading to degrees or other recognized closure incentives. *Informal* refers to training that takes place in the context of normal life activities. It does not necessarily mean "unintentional," but rather that the training revolves around normal situations that arise in life. *Non-formal* education refers to semi-organized preparation that

usually takes place outside the jurisdiction of formal training. It refers to organized, non-programmatic, functional training that focuses on skills and knowledge that can be immediately applied to practical ministry, much like an apprenticeship. See Robert Clinton, *Leadership Training Models* (Altadena, California: Barnabas Resources, 1986), 131–150. While distance theological education programs can be quite formal in their approach, generally they would be classified as non-formal, in that, usually, they intentionally incorporate intensive ministry experiences into the learning processes, although this may be changing.

[5] Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983). The discussion on the purpose and aim of theological education in America goes back to Kelly's study of theological education in 1924 and Richard Niebuhr's classic study of 1956. See Robert L. Kelly, *Theological Education in America: A Study of One Hundred Sixty-one Theological Schools in the United States and Canada* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1924); Richard H. Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and its Ministry: Reflections on the Aims of Theological Education* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956).

Moreover, Farley's work sparked a profusion of literature on the topic of the formative side of theological understanding and education over the next couple of decades. For representative examples, see Paul Merritt Bassett, ed., *The Aims and Purposes of Evangelical Theological Education,* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 2000); Don. S. Browning, David Polk, and Ian S. Evison, eds., *The Education of the Practical Theologian: Responses to Joseph Hough and John Cobb's "Christian Identity and Theological Education*," in Scholars Press Studies in Theological Education (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); Clark W. Gilpin, "Theological Education as the Formation of Character," *Theological Education*, Supplement 1, 24 (July 1988): 5–10; Joseph C. Hough, "The Education of Practical Theologians," *Theological Education* 20, no.2 (Spring 1984): 55–84; Joseph C. Hough and John B. Cobb, *Christian Identity and Theological Education*, Studies in Religious and Theological Scholarship (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1985); David H. Kelsey and Barbara G. Wheeler, "The ATS Basic Issues Research Project: Thinking about Theological Education," *Theological Education* 30 no. 2 (Spring 1994); Alan E. Lewis, "The Makings of a Theologian," *Insights* 109 (Spring 1994): 29–38; Charles M. Wood, *Vision and Discernment: An Orientation in Theological Study*, Studies in Religious and Theological Scholarship, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989) and *An Invitation to Theological Study* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1994); John Haddon Leith, *Crisis in the Church: The Plight of Theological Education* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).

In addition, David H. Kelsey published two works that were exceedingly influential in the debate revolving around the nature of theology and its relationship with theological education in general: *To Understand God Truly: What's Theological about a Theological School*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992) and *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing: 1993).

[6] Farley, 10.

[7] Farley, 11.

[8] Daniel O. Aleshire, *Beyond Profession: The Next Future of Theological Education* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021).

[9] Aleshire, 30.

[10] Aleshire, 86, italics in original.

[11] Robert Ferris, "The Role of Theology in Theological Education," in *With an Eye on the Future: Development and Mission in the 21st Century*, ed. Duane Elmer and Louis McKinney (Monrovia, California: MARC, 1996) and "The Future of Theological Education," in *Cyprus: TEE Come of Age*, ed. Robert Youngblood (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1984), 101–111.

[12] Samuel F. Rowen, "Missiology and the Coherence of Theological Education, in *With an Eye on the Future: Development and Mission in the 21st Century*, ed. Duane Elmer and Louis McKinney (Monrovia, California: MARC, 1996).
[13] Years ago, I heard this complaint from the laymen of the Lutheran congregations in the north of Brazil. The north of Brazil is quite different socially, economically, and culturally than the south of Brazil. Northern Brazil evidences much more African and Native American influence, while the south of Brazil is much more heavily influenced by European culture. At a regional conference I attended in the late 1990s, the lay-leadership of the northern regions verbalized that they had sent several of their sons south for seminary training, but by the time they completed their program of study, they had little inclination to return to the northern regions, preferring calls to the well-established congregations in the south where what they learned in the seminary would have more direct application than to the largely missional contexts of the north.
[14] The classic texts describing these issues as they immerged are Herbert Zorn's *Viability in Context: A Study of the Financial Viability of Theological Education in the Third World—Seedbed or Sheltered Garden?* (Kent, England: The Theological Education Fund, 1975), and James Bergquist and P. Kambar Manickam's *The Crisis of Dependency in Third World Ministries: A Critique of Inherited Missionary Forms in India* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1974).
[15] Jose B. Fuliga, "The Past, Present, and Evolving Theological Education in the Lutheran Church in the Philippines," *Evangelium* (1987), 102–113. The Seminario Augsburgo of Mexico City, operated jointly by the Lutheran ChurchMissouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church from 1964 to 1981, is another instance of the challenges that were observed with this type of residential seminary in certain contexts, at least as it was being operated at the time. During its seventeen-year history, it graduated twenty students from Central America. Of those twenty, only two were serving in Latin America by the year 2000; today, only one. Several immigrated to the United States to minister here, others went on to work in secular occupations.
[16] Fuliga, 105.
[17] This experiment of the Presbyterian Church of Guatemala became known as "theological education by extension" (TEE). It was developed in Guatemala through the work of people like James Emory, Ross Kinsler, and Ralph Winter, who were instrumental in the creation of the extension seminary for the Presbyterian church and mission. Around the same time, Lutheran missionaries in Guatemala were developing their own extension program for the training of catechists. See Rudy Blank, "Theological Education by Extension," *Lutheran Mission Matters* 28, no. 2 (November 2020): 286.
[18] See Marcos Kempff, "A Journey from Antigua Guatemala to St. Louis, Missouri: How Theological Education by Extension (TEE) Became a Reality for US Hispanic/Latina Lutheran Leadership Formation," *Lutheran Mission Matters* 28, no. 2 (November 2020): 291–307.
[19] Ferris, "The Future of Theological Education," 46–52.
[20] The principal accreditation agency for theological education in the US and Canada, the Association of Theological Schools, has recognized and set standards for extension and distance education, although the recognition did not come easily (see Elizabeth Patterson, "The Questions of Distance Education," *Theological Education* 33, no. 1, (1996): 59–74.) In the ten years between 2006 and 2016, ATS online enrollment spiked by 195%, while overall enrollment declined by 11%. See Sharon Miller and Christian Scharen, *(Not) Being There: Online Distance Theological Education* (New York: Auburn Seminary, 2017), 9, https://auburnseminary.org/report/not-being-there. This report is highly recommended for anyone interested in understanding the development and challenges of online distance learning

in recent years. The title of the report reflects a response to an influential study produced in 1997, which evaluated the impact of a school's culture on theological formation. Both *Being There* and *(Not) Being There* is a good starting point for further reflection on the advantages and disadvantages of residential and distance theological education programs. See Jackson W. Carroll, Barbara G. Wheeler, Daniel O. Aleshire, and Penny Long Marler, *Being There: Culture and Formation in Two Theological Schools* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[21] Ferris, "The Future of Theological Education," 45.

[22] Charles M. Wood, *Vision and Discernment: An Orientation in Theological Study*, Studies in Religious and Theological Scholarship (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

[23] Martin Luther, "Of God's Word," in *The Table-Talk of Martin Luther*, trans. William Hazlitt (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Publication Society, n.d., ca. 1850), 39–40. "Trials and tribulations" is a translation of the Latin *tentationis*.

[24] Martin Luther, Second Lecture on Psalms 15–19, *WA* 5.162.28. "Living—no, much more still by dying and being damned—makes a theologian, not by knowing, reading or speculation."

[25] An interesting study would be how Luther's ideas on theological formation made their way into the theological education program of Wittenberg University.

[26] In the distance programs operated by Concordia Seminary, for instance, the students are from the beginning classified as "vicars" or "interns" and deeply involved in the ministry of their local setting. This is not the case of some distance programs, where the in-ministry component is not as rigorously required.

[27] Miller and Scharen, *(Not) Being There*, 23.

[28] Even in a Missouri Synod mission publication, my work in Guatemala was once described as that of preparing "lay-pastors" for the church, when I never would have used that terminology. In fact, the goal was to train fully authenticated and duly called ordained pastors. Since the training was provided via a variety of non-formal models, it was assumed to be for "lay-pastors" rather than regular, ordained pastors.

[29] Miller and Scharen, *(Not) Being There*, 28.

[30] John Cartwright, Gabriel Etzel, Christopher Jackson, and Timothy Paul Jones, *Teaching the World: Foundations for Online Theological Education* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2017), 45–46. This book represents a helpful collaboration of four authors who recognize in a balanced way the challenges of online theological education and seek to provide thoughtful foundations and ideas for how they can be addressed.

[31] Miller and Scharen, *(Not) Being There*, 30.

[32] Miller and Scharen, *(Not) Being There*, 30.

[33] Miller and Scharen, *(Not) Being There*, 13.

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Integrating Theology & Mission in the Cross-cultural Ministry Center (CMC)

Glenn K. Fluegge
With contributions from Joel Rockemann & Carlos Velazquez

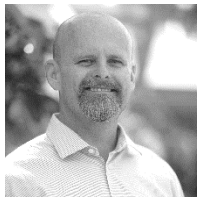
Introduction

How does one go about forming pastoral, missional leaders? That question is part of a larger ongoing conversation about the appropriate relation between theology and mission.[1] In this article, I attempt to get at that question and add to the conversation. I do that by giving the reader a glimpse of how one pastoral education program—the Cross-cultural Ministry Center at Concordia University Irvine—strives to integrate theology and mission with the goal of forming what we often refer to as "missionary pastors."

In what follows, I briefly describe the Cross-cultural Ministry Center, lay out the theoretical framework undergirding the curriculum, explain our educational model, and try to show how this plays out practically in our coursework and through the CMC missional vicarage (i.e., internship) experience. Then, two recent graduates of the Cross-cultural Ministry Center, Pastor Joel Rockemann and Pastor Carlos Velazquez, will offer personal reflections on their current ministries and describe how their time in the program helped prepare them for the mission contexts in which they now find themselves.

What is the Cross-cultural Ministry Center?

The Cross-cultural Ministry Center, often called the CMC, is a partnership between Concordia University Irvine and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis designed to offer a graduate level seminary program that forms "missionary pastors" for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. This partnership traces back to the mid-nineties and is in its twenty-eighth year. As part of that partnership, the CMC has been modeled after the M.Div. program at Concordia Seminary, but with an intentional mission focus



Rev. Dr. Glenn Fluegge currently serves as director of the Cross-cultural Ministry Center (CMC) and professor of theology at Concordia University Irvine in California. Previously, Glenn and his wife, Susan, were called as LCMS missionaries to Togo from 1998–2009. He then served in South Africa as lecturer at the Lutheran Theological Seminary from 2009–2012. Glenn received his M.Div. from Concordia Seminary, a M.S. in Education from Capella University, and a Ph.D. in Theology (Church History) from the University of Pretoria in South Africa.

aimed at forming pastors with the necessary missionary skills and habits of thought and practice to *cross cultures* and *reach the lost* with the Gospel in their communities.

In many ways, these two phrases—"crossing cultures" and "reaching the lost"—sum up the work of the "missionary pastor." They directly respond to two recent phenomena that are greatly reshaping the context of American Christianity: an increasingly *multicultural* society and an increasingly *unchurched* society. Both these phenomena present the church in the United States with an almost unprecedented opportunity and call for pastors who are deeply grounded in biblical and theological understanding and yet also equipped with specialized missionary skills. An increasingly *multicultural* society calls for pastors to be adept at "crossing cultures" more so than ever before. And an increasingly *unchurched* society calls for pastors to be skilled at "reaching the lost" like never before.

The CMC and the Interrelation Between Theology and Mission

In responding to these two phenomena, any pastoral formation program and, for that matter, the church in general, is continuously tempted to fall into two opposite unhelpful and unbiblical extremes. The first emphasizes the importance of theology to the exclusion or trivialization of mission. The second stresses the importance of mission to the exclusion or trivialization of theology. Almost all pastors, as well as those studying for the pastoral office, feel this tension and are inclined to focus on one more than the other. Some are enthusiastically inclined toward the academic study of theology and less engaged in the day-to-day mission of the church to the lost. Others are thoroughly enthused by outreach into their communities and less engaged in the pursuit of theological understanding.

As much as possible, the CMC attempts to avoid these extremes because such an approach wrongly dichotomizes theology and mission. It mistakenly treats them as somehow opposed to one another. Rather, the CMC attempts to help students view theology and mission as existing in an inextricable, indispensable interrelation such that each is rendered impossible without the other. That relation can be described as such: *Theology serves as the impetus for mission and mission provides the context for theology*.

This is essentially what the old missiologists at the turn of the twentieth century meant when they claimed that "mission is the mother of theology."[2] They recognized that theology is true because it is drawn from Scripture and that such theology inevitably fosters, advocates, and propels the theologian into mission practice. At the same time, that mission practice, where theology crosses boundaries and engages the world, inevitably drives the missionary back to Scripture and further theological reflection.

The Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans is a great example of this. In that letter, the doctrine of justification propels Paul to extend his missionary activities to the known ends of the earth because they must hear the good news to have faith and be saved (Rom 10). Simultaneously, the mission to Spain provides the occasion and context for him to further expound on the topic of justification (Rom 3–4) and its relation to other areas of Christian doctrine (Rom 6–9) and practice (Rom 12–14). It is hard to imagine we would have the book of Romans and its insightful analysis of

justification grounded in Genesis 15 apart from Paul's missionary activities and his desire to embark on a missionary journey to Spain.[3]

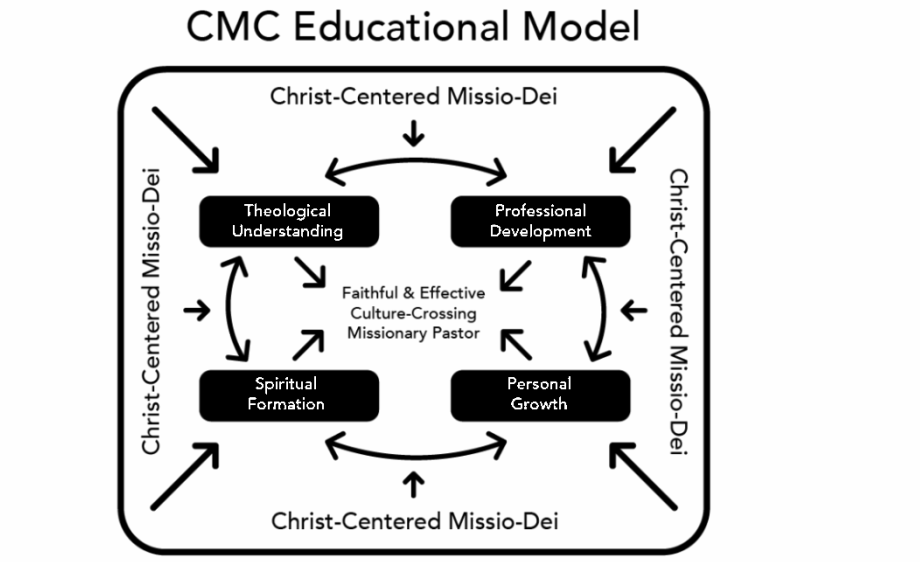
Hence, theology and mission go hand in hand. The interrelation could be illustrated as a never-ending circle with each feeding into the other. But perhaps it would be better seen as a helix: theology engenders mission, which, in turn, leads towards greater theological understanding, which, in turn, engenders greater engagement in mission, which, in turn, leads towards even greater theological understanding, which, in turn, leads to even greater engagement in mission, and so on and so forth. Theology and mission continually cultivate each other in a kind of symbiotic relationship, each playing its distinct role, never static, but spiraling upward towards greater levels of understanding and engagement.

In the CMC, this interrelation between theology and mission is often likened to the relation Martin Luther established between *meditatio* (deep study of God's Word) and *tentatio* (life's trials and tribulations) when he described the best way to form theologians. Mission practice, that is, confessing one's faith across boundaries and striving to do so in such a way that it will be heard and understood, inevitably gives rise to tensions, trials, and tribulations (*tentationes*). These drive the theologian back into prayer and a deeper study of God's Word. But it never ends there because that deeper theological reflection steeped in God's Word propels the theologian back into engagement with the world through mission practice. And so on. In the CMC, much of the *meditatio* happens in the classroom. The CMC Missional Vicarage (see below for a fuller explanation) often occasions the *tentationes*.

Hence, when kept integrally together, theology and mission form and shape what we refer to in the CMC as the "missionary pastor."

The CMC Educational Model

How does the interrelation of theology and mission look when it comes to the CMC curriculum? If one were to diagram the CMC's approach to theological education, it might look something like this:



The outer frame represents the Christ-centered Missio Dei (i.e., God's work to save all people centered in the person and work of Christ Jesus). This integrative missiological orientation shapes and permeates the entire curriculum and every aspect of the CMC.

That curriculum is made up of four major learning areas that contribute to the formation of the *faithful & effective culture-crossing missionary pastor*:

- Theological Understanding
- Professional Development
- Spiritual Formation
- Personal Growth

Although separated in the diagram, in reality the four learning areas are closely interrelated and interdependent (hence the connecting arrows).

Integrating Mission into Coursework

Much of the Theological Understanding component takes place through the academic courses. The coursework of the CMC program is similar to that of a typical M.Div. program in terms of the types of courses, the number of semester hours, and the graduate level at which they are taught. However, we attempt to bring in a missiological emphasis in two distinct ways.

First, to the extent possible, professors are encouraged to bring out the missiological dimension in their various courses, whether systematic, historical,

exegetical, or practical. Students are also expected to do the same, bringing to bear on their courses what they are experiencing through the CMC Missional Vicarage experience (see below).

Of course, this happens in some courses (e.g., Pastoral Theology) more so than in others (e.g., Greek). And some faculty are more adept at this than others. In any case, the idea is to continuously work toward a curriculum that intentionally leads students to a deeper understanding of God's Christ-centered Mission and how it relates to every aspect of theology such that mission and theology are intricately connected.[4] A few examples may serve to illustrate how this is done. In their Old Testament Isagogics course, students write a paper on the Missio Dei as found in the Old Testament. In their course on World Religions, students actually visit local worship sites of the various religions they are studying, interact with local religious leaders, and reflect on ways they might engage with and share the Christian faith with others from different religious backgrounds. In their course on Reformation History, students write a final paper answering the question, "How does the theology of the Lutheran reformers flow naturally into Christian witness and outreach to the lost?" And in their Lutheran Confessions course, students write a final concluding section to a major paper in which they explain how the various confessional statements are inherently missional. They then draft a statement of "What We Believe" to be put up on their church's website aimed at those outside of the church. These are but a few examples.

Secondly, students take courses specifically aimed at forming in them missionary habits of thought and practice. These include courses such as *Ministry in Cultural Context*, where students learn to view religion from a sociological/anthropological perspective with the goal of ministering to people from various cultural backgrounds, and *Theology and Practice of Mission*, where students develop a biblical theology of mission and explore how one crosses cultures and socio-economic levels with the Gospel. About halfway through the program, students also take two important courses, *Entrepreneurial Mission Planting* and *Mission Planting Institute*, that prepare them to successfully launch a new ministry during their vicarage (see below).

Integrating Mission into the CMC Vicarage (Internship)

Much of the learning in the remaining three learning areas—Professional Development, Spiritual Formation, and Personal Growth—happens through what has come to be called the CMC Missional Vicarage.

This vicarage (as it is called in the LCMS) is a required four-year internship at a local congregation and under the mentorship of a pastor during which students grow personally, spiritually, and professionally as pastoral and missionary leaders. Every semester, students submit a personal growth plan, a spiritual formation plan, and a professional development plan in which they articulate goals related to ministry activities such as preaching, teaching, visiting, administration, etc. Then they carry out these activities and journal their progress throughout the semester.

The CMC Missional Vicarage, per its name, is also specifically designed to help students acquire missionary habits and skills. One of these habits is to resist the tendency to focus on "internal activities" aimed at those within our church community and to neglect those "external activities" aimed at engaging those outside of our

church. There is, of course, quite a bit of overlap between the two and both are necessary. But most church leaders, including CMC vicars, find themselves pulled toward "internal activities" and away from "external activities." Why? Because there are normally not as many structures of accountability for the latter. For example, if a pastor doesn't show up to preach Sunday morning, he'll certainly hear about it. But if he doesn't take time every Tuesday morning to do a prayer walk through the Latino community behind his church, most likely no one will say anything.

This is one reason the CMC vicarage is a bit more "regimented" than what might be considered a traditional vicarage or internship. It attempts to set up some structures of accountability for those external mission-focused activities. For this reason, every semester CMC vicars also create goals related to externally focused mission activities such as language and cultural learning, community awareness and ministry, mission awareness and leadership, and reaching the unchurched.

Additionally, the capstone project of the CMC engages students in mission. About halfway through the program, students take the two specific courses mentioned above, *Entrepreneurial Mission Planting* and *Mission Planting Institute*. These courses prepare students to study their communities, plan, and then launch a new ministry that crosses a significant cultural barrier into a non-Anglo or heavily multi-cultural milieu, and reaches people outside of the church in the surrounding community. Students then launch their new ministries, revising and creating new goals that they work to accomplish every semester and submitting end of the semester progress reports. This new culture-crossing ministry start serves as the capstone project of the CMC. The plan, progress reports, and a final reflection paper are included in the student's final vicarage portfolio, along with several other artifacts from their time in the CMC.

The Perspective of Two Former CMC Students

The intended result of the CMC curriculum and simultaneous vicarage program is to form Lutheran pastors who are *rooted* in Scripture, *confessional* in their theology, and *embedded* in their communities while *creatively and adaptively carrying out the Mission of the Church*.

In what follows, two graduates of the CMC describe their background, their current ministry contexts, and how their time in the CMC contributed to shaping them into pastoral, missional leaders.

Joel Rockemann, Missional Pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Tracy, CA

I serve as missional pastor at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Tracy, CA, a city east of San Francisco Bay that lies in the heart of California's Central Valley. While agricultural work is an important theme of the Central Valley, the city of Tracy is unique because it is also a "commuter" town from which many people travel to the Bay Area daily for tech jobs in Silicon Valley. Tracy has a less expensive cost of living than the Bay Area, and as a result most of its population is middle to lower middle class. These nuances serve as a catalyst for immigrant families looking to cultivate a safe and secure life in the United States and contribute to the wonderfully diverse

group of people who call Tracy their home. Because our congregation feels very strongly that the good news of Jesus is for all people, we believe that our congregation ought to reflect the diverse community we serve.

Before accepting the call as missional pastor at St. Paul's, my family had been serving as missionaries in Haiti. Though we had done plenty of short-term mission work in Haiti for about ten years, our time living in-country and working at an orphanage/neonatal care facility in the Kenscoff mountains north of Port au Prince highlighted the importance of being able to speak the local language with confidence. What would often be the simplest of tasks (e.g., negotiating transportation fees, shopping for food, meeting neighbors, communicating with coworkers) was often a stressful challenge until we became fluent enough to navigate these tasks without a translator. Through language classes and immersive training, we learned the local dialect of Haitian Kreyol to the point where we were able to advocate for ourselves and our Haitian coworkers and friends. We were ultimately able to do everything from shopping at local markets for better prices, to empathizing more deeply with the joys and sorrows of our Haitian brothers and sisters, to sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the people with whom we had built relationships. This led also to many conversations with our Haitian coworkers about their desire to learn English. As a result, I built and began teaching an ESL class there, a challenging task which I came to love.

Upon returning to the United States, I became much more aware of local immigrant populations' difficulties in navigating the nuances of our predominantly English-speaking culture. I felt like I better understood their angst for communicating well, and I wanted to help meet their need. As a result, in coordination with our church and as my capstone vicarage project in the Cross-cultural Ministry Center, we worked to launch a free adult English language class that would be held on our church and school campus during our family ministry nights.

That new ministry continues and has become invaluable for connecting our church to our diverse immigrant communities around us. Our goal is to empower people to effectively navigate a predominantly English-speaking culture and to forge trust-filled, lasting relationships with our language students and their families. In addition to the free instruction, each class provides free childcare, and we prepare and share a free meal prior to the beginning of each class. The childcare and meal preparation are all done by our church families, which has been a great way of facilitating further connection between church and student families.

The CMC program was the seminary training that I needed to be able to effectively minister in our diverse cultural context. I recall especially a class taught by Dr. Jack Schultz called, *Ministry in a Cultural Context*, where we focused on the reality that having an anthropological understanding of how people's faith and culture interact is critical for all Christians, and especially important for missionary pastors. How we minister and interact with the diverse people in our community will either attract or repel them from wanting to have a relationship with us. An effective missionary pastor must care about understanding (i.e. *standing among*) people with whom he desires to share the Gospel. It is important for us to learn how the world looks from the *other* person's perspective in order that we might better understand the

cultural system in which that person is situated. This helps give us the knowledge and discernment required to effectively love our neighbor (Phil 1:9–11).

The CMC program and its faculty also do a great job of combining excellent theological instruction with immediate application. Because the CMC vicarage program runs concurrently during the four-year CMC course of study, what CMC students learn in class immediately fuels the work that they are doing in ministry and mission on a daily basis. I found that the vicarage experience was integral to my formation as a missionary pastor. In addition to preparing me for the work of preaching, teaching, and walking alongside God's people on a daily basis, the CMC vicarage also helped me navigate the process of launching a meaningful culture-crossing ministry. From researching the various needs of the community, to drafting and refining a focused mission and vision blueprint, to growing a team and generating support, my time as a CMC vicar was the proving ground for building our free adult English ministry focused on serving immigrant adults in our surrounding community.

Finally, whereas the *Theology & Practice of Mission* course certainly spearheads the effort, I was always impressed by how well the entire CMC course framework instills in us students the focus of "Gospel-motivated" mission work. One of the greatest challenges in spreading the Gospel is helping our people realize that in following Jesus they are also privileged to participate in God's mission, not as a matter of Law, but as a matter of Gospel. Our motivation for reaching others with the good news of Jesus Christ comes, first and foremost, from recognizing that we ourselves have been freed by the very same Jesus. Being set free from the bondage of sin and death is the greatest motivation we have for proclaiming Christ to those who do not yet know Him as Lord and Savior. To that end, the Holy Spirit uses Christ's Gospel work in us to propel us forward in proclaiming the same Gospel to others and in lovingly providing for the needs of our neighbor.

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This "Gospel-motivated" approach to mission instilled in me while in the CMC has also shaped the way we've developed our English language ministry and other mission activities. Everyone in our congregation is apportioned certain gifts and is privileged to use these in service to God's mission. Through my time in Haiti and in the CMC I have realized, for example, that I am gifted at teaching English to groups of people who have varied first languages and cultural backgrounds. But we have also built numerous ways for others from our congregation to be involved in this English language ministry by cooking and/or serving food, helping with childcare, financially supporting our work by purchasing classroom supplies, meeting a specific need of one of our student's families, and the list goes on. We all play our unique part propelled

forward by the same work of Christ on our behalf. This fosters a sense of unity as we learn together, laugh and cry together, pray and eat together, and now, by God's grace, in ones and twos, slowly but surely, worship together.

I truly believe that the CMC faculty has been instrumental in my formation as a missionary pastor who loves cultivating and encouraging beautifully unique and diverse people to "[devote] themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

Carlos Velazquez, Assistant Pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Orange, CA
(Transcribed and edited from an interview)

I currently serve as assistant pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Orange, CA and am the lead pastor of St. Paul Español, the Hispanic ministry and outreach of St. Paul Lutheran Church. In that role, I lead the Spanish services in Word & Sacrament ministry, lead Bible studies, and care for the members of our Latino community at St. Paul.

I'm also involved in strategizing for continued outreach into the Latino community around us. We have several outreach initiatives that we're involved in. We've organized school supply drives and Christmas toy drives. We offer bilingual music classes for the community, open up our campus for youth to play sports, and partner with St. John's Lutheran Church to provide support and care for foster families, most of which are Hispanic. We also partner with Charity on Wheels to provide clothing, food, and basic care for poverty-stricken people, including a time of fellowship and worship.

I've also been blessed to help found a Hispanic Circuit in the Pacific Southwest District and currently serve as a "visitor" for that circuit. The goal of this circuit is to bring together and encourage Hispanic leaders in our district, who are otherwise scattered and often isolated, and to encourage and resource new Hispanic ministries. This also includes identifying and training up the next generation of Hispanic leaders.

The Cross-cultural Ministry Center really helped to prepare me for my current ministry. But let me back up and share a bit about my background and how I came to the CMC. I grew up in Mexico City. My mother was Roman Catholic and my father was evangelical. I was baptized as a baby but didn't go to church much as a child. When I was a teenager, my uncle witnessed to us about his journey out of addiction and into Christianity. As a result of that, I started going to church with him. The church we attended was of a more conservative Pentecostal background. I attended that church regularly for several years and was a part of their youth group, along with Samuel Gomez and Zabdi Lopez (both of whom also graduated from the Cross-cultural Ministry Center in the early 2000's).

However, during college, I ended up leaving the church again. It wasn't until I finished college with a degree in law and had started working for some companies that I returned to the church. To make a long story short, my life collapsed in on me and, as a result, it drove me back to the church. After I met my wife in 2005, the pastor of the Christian Missionary Alliance church we were attending encouraged me to become a pastor and, at that time, I started looking into the possibility of going to seminary. But for some reason or another, I put if off and focused on my career as a lawyer.

Finally, after several years, my wife and I made the decision that I would go into full-time ministry.

It was then that Pastor Sam Gomez introduced me to the Cross-cultural Ministry Center. Pastor Sam had graduated from the CMC much earlier and had launched Grace Latino Ministries, a ministry that worked with existing Lutheran congregations throughout the Pacific Southwest District of the LCMS to plant Hispanic churches. In 2014, I came to the States with Pastor Sam and had my first conversation with Dr. Fluegge, Director of the CMC. I had also started reading up on Lutheran theology and decided that this was the direction in which God was calling me.

So I moved to the States with my family in 2015 and began working with Pastor Sam and Grace Latino Ministries with a Hispanic church plant that Pastor Sam had previously started at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Orange, CA. My English was not great, so I spent six months in intense ESL classes at Concordia University Irvine before starting the CMC program in 2016.

The CMC provided me with a solid and firm theological education which served as the foundation for my future ministry. Since I was not coming from a Lutheran background, I really appreciated the gifted professors who helped me understand the riches of Lutheran Reformation theology that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone. I valued, for example, my homiletics class and how it taught me how to distinguish Law and Gospel in a distinctly Lutheran way. At the same time, I appreciated how my professors understood our future vocations as missionary pastors and how they balanced between systematic and pastoral theology, while also bringing in the cultural relevance of the various theological topics we covered. As far as culture and missions, I remember especially the class *Ministry in Cultural Context*, which taught us to understand human beings as cultural beings. This was important for my ministry, especially as I often found myself navigating and serving as the bridge between the larger English-speaking congregation and our much smaller Hispanic ministry. I learned from the course *Pastor as Missionary* that the Great Commission of Matthew 28 is part of the much larger narrative of God's mission for our salvation as revealed throughout the entire Bible with Christ at its center as the ultimate missionary.

During my CMC vicarage, I worked first with Pastor Sam of Grace Latino Ministries and then with Pastor Christenson, lead pastor at St. Paul, to help launch and develop the Hispanic church and ministry there at St. Paul Lutheran Church. My new ministry launch during my vicarage was to continue building up that ministry, not only leading the services on Sunday, but also exploring various ways to reach into the community throughout the week, connecting with members and reaching new people as well. We encountered many challenges. When President Trump was elected there was concern and worry within the broader Hispanic community. I had to calm the fears of my Latino brothers and sisters and also navigate between the Anglo and Hispanic congregations. COVID-19 also presented us with numerous challenges. But by God's grace we made it through and are stronger because of it. All of this happened through the CMC vicarage and was an important part of my formation as a Lutheran pastor.

In short, my entire experience in the CMC prepared me to carry out my duties as a pastor, teaching and confessing Lutheran theology, while always aware of the social realities and challenges of the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

How does one go about forming pastoral, missional leaders? This article has provided a glimpse at how one pastoral education program responds to this question and especially how it seeks to integrate mission and theology. For more information, visit www.cui.edu/cmc.

ENDNOTES

[1] The conversation about the relation between theology and mission lies at the center of the debate over how one integrates mission into theological education. Many solutions have been proposed over the years. See, e.g., David Bosch, "Theological Education in Missionary Perspective," *Missiology* 10, no. 1 (1982): 13–34; Andrew Kirk, *The Mission of Theology and Theology as Mission* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997); Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999).

[2] See, e.g., Martin Kähler, "Die Mission – ist sie ein unentbehrlicher Zug am Christentum?" in *Schriften zu Christologie und Mission*: *Gesmtausgabe der Schriften zur Mission Mit einer Bibliographie*, ed. Heinzgünter Frohnes (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, [1908] 1971), 190: "Die älteste Mission wurde zur Mutter der Theologie."

[3] This is not to say that Paul created the doctrine of justification to justify his mission activity or defend racial inclusivism, as the New Perspective on Paul often does. It does not seem to me that the doctrine of justification is peripheral or incidental in Paul's thinking, but rather central and foundational. See Mark Seifrid, "The 'New Perspective on Paul' and Its Problems," *Themelios* 25, no. 2 (2000): 4–18. However, his missionary journeys do provide the occasion for his expositions on justification in both Romans and Galatians.

[4] For the sake of full disclosure, we are still quite far from achieving the goal of integrating mission into all of our courses in the CMC. It is definitely still a work in progress and, I believe, we have a ways to go. There are numerous challenges, including the lack of textbooks that integrate mission into the various theological subjects and limitations of faculty whose expertise and interest may lie elsewhere than missiology. One solution would be to create "course guidebooks" for every course with set textbooks, outcomes, and assignments that would emphasize the course's missiological dimension. Of course, this would require widespread faculty cooperation and support.

From the Field: Forming Mission Leaders through Contextual Education in the Specific Ministry Pastor Program

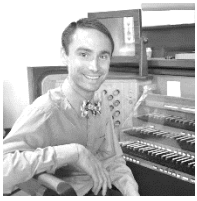
James F. Marriott

Abstract

As one well acquainted with students in the SMP program, the author provides background and verbatim interviews with four students who represent those who participate in this seminary program of pastoral formation while engaged in their local mission contexts. Their personal reflections on both their contexts and this certification program provide insight into how one way of delivering seminary formation can intersect with actual mission experience.

The Specific *Ministry* Pastor (SMP) Program of the LCMS has from its inception intersected the pursuits of *missional leadership* and ministerial formation in a variety of unique ways. In this article, you'll hear from the director of the SMP program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, as well as from four recent participants in that program, each of whom is engaged in a unique missional context. These four represent a wider collegium of pastors formed in this program who serve in specific and unique contexts, faithfully engaging in ministry and bearing fruit in the Kingdom. They all offer personal reflections on their ministry contexts and how this pastoral formation program has supported and shaped their missional leadership.

I have had the privilege of teaching in the SMP Program for the better part of a decade and have taught the four students featured here. I have also served with SMP pastors in three of my own ministry contexts. I am proud to be able to collect



Rev. Dr. James Marriott is the Assistant Professor of Music and Department Coordinator (Chair) of Music at Concordia University Texas. Holding undergraduate and graduate degrees in Parish Music from Concordia Nebraska and Concordia Wisconsin, respectively, he earned a Ph.D. in Liturgical Studies from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, IL, with an emphasis in liturgical inculturation. He was also ordained into the pastoral ministry through Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He frequently lectures and performs across the United States, using workshops and hymn festivals as an opportunity to demonstrate the cultural diversity of the church. Jim and his wife, Kristi, have been married for twenty years and are blessed with two children, Joel and Kirstin.

and organize these stories for you, the reader, that you too may celebrate the work of our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, who by the Holy Spirit calls His Church to the ministry of Word and Sacrament.

The pastors featured in this article volunteered to write, responding to a general invitation sent out by the SMP Program director to students in the program. I prompted the volunteers with two simple questions, asking them to describe their ministry contexts (especially their missional scopes) and to describe how their seminary education prepared them for service in their ministry contexts. I also asked the current SMP Program director at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Rev. Dr. W. Mart Thompson, to provide a brief explanation of the program, which is offered at both LCMS Seminaries.

Mart Thompson, Director of the SMP Program, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

The Specific Ministry Pastor Program was established by the LCMS at the 2007 Synodical Convention when it created the SMP Certification and directed its seminaries to provide pastoral formation that would prepare men to serve in specific pastoral ministry contexts through a unique distance education program. Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne began offering the SMP Program in 2008 and have continued to do so since that time.

This program forms pastors for supervised service in specific ministry contexts where they live. They include revitalizing small churches (at times, on the verge of closing), part-time specialized ministries at larger churches, church planting, prison ministry, and various places for service by local men with unique gifts for pastoral ministry in specific contexts. Many SMP pastors are retired or bivocational. In some places they serve full time, but the majority serve part time. Some serve alone in small churches. Others serve on staff in larger churches. The average entrance age of students entering the SMP Program is forty-seven years. Some students complete the program in their late seventies. However, other students are younger and enter with the intention of seeking additional education after SMP to achieve a General Ministry Certification, which allows for rostering as those from traditional programs.

So, what is the SMP Program like? It consists of a four-year curriculum taught year-round at a master's degree level. (It is a certificate program; however, eligible students can earn an MA through this program.) Students receive this rigorous academic formation from full-time seminary professors and part-time guest instructors who are pastors with advanced degrees and serve full-time in the church. This gives a balance of academic excellence and skill in the practice of ministry. The curriculum is delivered through weeklong, on-campus intensive classes as well as ten-week online courses taught in a synchronous, interactive format by professors. This enables students to learn where they live and serve. While taking classes in this contextual educational curriculum, students work with local pastor-mentors who support them in the program, help them apply their new course knowledge, and offer them day-to-day guidance, encouragement, and prayer. These mentors are trained for this work and paid by the seminary. Students are also formed in a learning community, a cohort of men (capped at 12) with whom they also exchange encouragement and support for

service to the Lord's Church. We sometimes refer to their cohorts as "bands of brothers" because of the close bonds formed through their online and on-campus connections.

For more information on the SMP Program and the unique SMP Certification go to https://www.csl.edu/smp and https://www.ctsfw.edu/future-students/pastoral/smp/. You may also visit https://www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/education/pastoral/seminary-education for a more comprehensive explanation of pastoral formation in the LCMS.

Chad Bresson, The Table of Los Fresnos, Los Fresnos, TX

Since the summer of 2018, I have been the (full-time and sole) lead church planter at The Table of Los Fresnos in Los Fresnos, Texas—a Word and Sacrament church plant of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Harlingen, Texas. The Table of Los Fresnos was launched in September of 2019 (we often say we launched knowing we only had six months before COVID-19 hit). The Table is approximately twenty-five minutes north of the border and twenty-five minutes to the southeast of St. Paul. Los Fresnos is the second fastest growing community in the entire Rio Grande Valley (RGV). It is 92 percent Hispanic and in one of the poorest economic regions in the entire US. The Table of Los Fresnos was chartered as a congregation of the LCMS in the Texas District in June of 2021, and I was ordained and installed as The Table's first pastor in September of 2021. The "target market" for The Table is unchurched and de-churched parents, ages thirty-five to fifty, with children in elementary and middle school. ("De-churched" refers to those who used to go to church, left the church, and were not in church until coming to The Table.) Most of those who are de-churched in the RGV come from Catholic or Pentecostal backgrounds, and more than half of those who are now at The Table are formerly de-churched. Many who are at The Table are there because of our community service projects, our sponsorship of Little League baseball teams, participation in community events such as the Los Fresnos Rodeo, and engagement in a Rotary club made up of a majority of the community leaders. We have a few "cradle-to-grave" Lutherans who came over from St. Paul, the mother church, but our focus has been on those who are not currently participating in a faith community.

I recently completed my Specific Ministry Pastor studies at Concordia, St. Louis. Prior to being the lead church planter at The Table, I spent twelve years as a pastor in non-denominational churches in Ohio and Brownsville, Texas, serving as an academic administrator and Bible exposition instructor in the Antioch School of Church Planting and Leadership Development (Ames, IA), the Center for Pioneer Church Planting (Los Fresnos, TX), and the Simeon Trust Bible Expositional Workshops (Chicago, IL). Currently, I participate in an Exponential cohort of Texas District pastors and church planters. As the lead church planter, it has been my responsibility to build relationships within the community of Los Fresnos (where my family and I have resided for the past nine and a half years), form the core team for the church plant from St. Paul, lead the vision and planning for the church plant, and oversee the organization and communications of the

plant. I also implement social media, community service projects and outreach events, and facilitate anything else related to effective church planting.

The SMP program has made a significant impact on our church planting efforts at The Table in multiple ways. Because SMP is non-residential, it has allowed us to plant a church in our home city among those we are most familiar, reaching those we have come to know in the school district and business community. And, as it was for Paul and Barnabas at Antioch, the non-residential program allows the local church to be a significant contributor and incubator to pastoral formation and training. The mentoring component of SMP was critical, as it allowed me to continue being discipled and shaped by the pastor primarily responsible for bringing me into the Lutheran fold. As a "newbie" in the Lutheran tradition, the early classes in the SMP Program provided significant context to both the church plant and my call. In fact, as I look back over the four years, Introduction to Pastoral Ministry (and Walther as a primary text) and Introduction to Worship may have been the most impactful classes I had. Being immersed in the Altenburg Debate story gave me context not only for the LCMS in history, but also for the church plant in the RGV. It was here that Walther's Confessional definition of church became central to all things church plant: where the Gospel is faithfully preached and the Sacraments rightly administered. Introduction to Worship gave me a framework for worship service design. While The Table utilizes a contextualized worship approach, the movement of the service from creation to new creation and from sinner to saint through confession, forgiveness, and Word and Sacrament is still evident in the service. It was here, too, that I was introduced to Luther's seminal essay, "On the German Mass," in which the idea of contextualized worship is broached by Luther himself. Luther's contextualized thoughts were then reinforced through study of Leopoldo Sanchez's own work on the contextualization of Word and Sacrament.

One other significant contribution of SMP was the fine-tuning of my preaching through the homiletics courses. Preaching is a learning experience over a lifetime, but taking time to specifically think and work through the entire preaching enterprise was quite helpful in supporting how my own sermon preparation takes place throughout the week. And if I didn't love the Book of Concord already, being immersed in the Book of Concord for an entire course (Lutheran Confessions) gave me not only a love for the Confessions, but a passion for making it accessible in the 2023 culture of the RGV. And, of course, SMP benefits from some of the best faculty in the Christian world. Having a week with Dale Meyer all to ourselves (Preaching 2) was the highlight of the four years. Much, much wisdom was gleaned during that intensive week (summer of 2022). Okamoto (Means of Grace), Furgeson (Pastor as Leader), Marriott (Introduction to Worship), and Fisher (Church and its Life) were all highlights.

And if I didn't love the Book of Concord already, being immersed in the Book of Concord for an entire course (Lutheran Confessions) gave me not only a love for the Confessions, but a passion for making it accessible in the 2023 culture of the RGV.

Okamoto deepened my appreciation of the Sacraments, Furgeson personified Pastor as Theologian, being able to glean wisdom from a pastor who is in the parish trenches every week. The same was true of Fisher's class, where a pastor provides a parish context to what is being taught. And Marriott pushed me out of my comfort zone in the study of rites and rituals and their impact on congregational life. All of this had a significant impact on what Word and Sacrament ministry looks like at The Table, even in a highly contextualized setting. This is the beauty of SMP: seminal thought working itself out in real time and space of pastoral ministry in the church plant. What is taught and studied in SMP has immediate impact and application, or as I frequently stated throughout the program, what is taught and learned on Mondays (the day of the online SMP Zoom class) is applied on Tuesday.

One other thought about SMP, from one who has been a pastor in another tradition and has been involved in church planting outside of the LCMS: a critical component generally lacking from SMP is mission and multiplication. In four years, only one professor broached the subject. I'm not speaking of evangelism. The idea that both pastors and churches should be multiplying themselves seems to me to be a (mostly) foreign idea in pastoral ministry. While this critique could be aimed at the seminary in general, SMP is where there is great opportunity for our denomination and seminaries to not just be filling pulpits but to be developing the missional enterprise of multiplying pastors and churches. There will always be a need for the residential program. But in 2023, now more than ever, technology has made pastoral formation, training, and development possible beyond the residential programs. That possibility is an opportunity to grow our denomination during a time when many churches are closing, vacant pulpits outnumber pastors available, and membership is in decline.

Art Stevens, Grace Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, CA

My mission and ministry is to the incarcerated, something I have been doing as a volunteer at R. J. Donovan Correctional Facility near Otay Mesa in San Diego, California and other institutions for the last eight years. This is a second career for me after working as a general contractor in Southern California for over forty years. If we define missional leadership as paying attention to what God is doing in your life, and how He opens opportunities for you and others, then my story fits the description.

My dear friend the Reverend Mike Bonner (now called home to Jesus) from San Diego is responsible for pushing me into prison ministry. I say “pushing” because he kept asking me to join him on a Sunday at Donovan to “just meet the guys.” I’ve spent forty years trying to stay out of prison—not going into one. But, just to humor my friend, I finally agreed and drove down to San Diego. I remember thinking, as we entered the employee gate with the concertina wire and electric fencing, *this is serious business*.

Pastor Mike and I would spend a short time together inside Donovan in Yard D, ministering to the men, not knowing that soon everything would change. Years earlier, I had entered the deacon program and had completed my ten classes, and

Mike had ideas that I would be his deacon inside the prison. I was waiting for him at a pastors' conference in Phoenix when word came that my friend had unexpectedly passed away on his way to the conference. I wondered if this was the way God was telling me I wasn't going to be a prison deacon. Well, at Mike's funeral, the prison chaplain came up to me and asked if I was a Lutheran. I acknowledged that I was, and he wanted to know if I could do a catechism class that needed to be finished. The challenge was, could I do this? With "no" not being in my vocabulary, I thought, *These are adults; these guys could surely get done in one year*. I committed to a year in my mind and said "yes." Three years later, we completed the class of twelve men, and I realized then and there that I had learned more during that time about who Jesus was than they did, but that I needed much more training to teach the narrative of the Bible confidently.

My background in the Church has included being involved with many of the functions of my congregation as a lay leader. I was head trustee, an elder for many years, and a congregational president. Each time, God was grooming me for something very different in my life; I just didn't know it. I now know that God was calling me in ways I wasn't ready to understand; He was calling me to step out of my safe zone. I would enter the SMP Program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and get what God knew I needed.

Just like using the right tools brought me to a successful construction career, the training at Concordia provided the right tools to prepare me for a confident ministry. I remember that first day, nervously sitting beside my mentor awaiting our introduction, when Pastor Mart Thompson came in and introduced Dale Meyer, then President of Concordia Seminary. Dale told us we were going to be pastors in every sense of the word. Eventually we had a great class with Dale on preaching, one of my most memorable courses. Our first class was with Rev. Dr. Paul Biber, an introduction on pastoral ministry that set the stage for how God sent His Son to rescue and restore His beloved creation. Dr. James Marriott, a gifted organist, was our instructor for the worship course. He taught us about confessional Lutheran style and defined worship for us. With Rev. Dr. Timothy Roser, we learned what a narrative is and how to live it. Professor David Maxwell taught us how to look deeper into the central chapters of the Christian story, how to think in terms of doctrines as ways of talking about the meaning of various narrative elements that together comprise the Christian story. Professor Maxwell's class was our first intensive class held on campus for a week. We got a chance to experience what it means to just be there in person. Everyone I met was gracious, understanding, and willing to help me as I walked in a world I wasn't yet used to. Rev. Dr. Richard Serina would teach about Lutheran distinctions and how they are not only doctrinal, but in proclamation and pastoral care the right distinctions to guide theology, keeping the Christian story centered on the Gospel. And this was just our first year—three more to go!

I can attest that the training we received was thorough. The seminary sets up a program of study online, which is intent on providing those tools I talked about. Our professors Abjar Bakou, Joel Okamoto, Brian Gauthier, Kevin Armbrust (our instructor for OT and Creedal Themes), Victor Raj, Alex Fisher, Kale Hanson, Timothy Dost, and Jon Furgeson, as well as those previously mentioned, all played a part in graciously making sure we stayed on track. Thank you all!

I will be forever grateful for the steady support of my mentor Pastor, Chuck Brady, throughout this whole life-changing study experience. Pastor Brady met with me every week for four years, guiding me and offering his wisdom on the subjects at hand. Without his pastoral wisdom, I wouldn't have had such a great experience. Pastor Brady and the professors who are willingly teaching God's Word, encouraging us all, are the very definition of the Greek word *charis*, translated, *of grace and loving-kindness*. God certainly knows how to get His message out to a needy world.

Now I am called to Grace Lutheran as their representative in prison ministry. My ordination was conducted on September 19, 2021 at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in the inner city of Los Angeles. I am also the PSD Prison Ministry Coordinator as an SMP pastor, having just graduated in January 2023 at the age of seventy-seven, after four years of study at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.

Martin Cornes, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, MN

In January 2020, I arrived at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Northeast Minneapolis, a church which was expecting to close its doors. My position as a multiethnic outreach missionary was jointly funded by the church and the Minnesota South District for three years. I serve as the sole pastor at Gloria Dei, and my mentor attends a nearby church; it has been a great encouragement and motivation to me to have someone viewing my service from the outside.

Shortly after I arrived, COVID-19 happened, and then the riots in Minneapolis, just a few miles south of the church. These events brought numerous issues to our attempts to revitalize a church and outreach to the local area. This started with a focus on renewing the congregation's confidence in God's Word, (using The Story curriculum for sermons and arranging a new time for Bible studies) and enabling and exciting the congregation for missional possibilities. There was emphasis on sharing their faith on a one-to-one basis as they go about living their lives, as well as reaching out in innovative ways to the community, such as handing out roses and candy to the community, carol singing, and generally letting the community know that if the church wasn't there it would be missed. In sum, opening the congregation's eyes to the possibilities of how the Lord might use them and Gloria Dei, even outside their comfort zones, has led to 40 percent growth, including new converts.

In sum, opening the congregation's eyes to the possibilities of how the Lord might use them and Gloria Dei, even outside their comfort zones, has led to 40 percent growth, including new converts.

Our SMP courses were largely held during COVID-19. This reduced the number of intensives, which might explain why, when we did meet, they were most impactful. The professors, several of whom were also serving in a

congregation, made an immense impact, as they shared their knowledge, giving space for relevant discussion and teaching. The opportunity to find relevant fieldwork experience offered the possibility to attend an impactful Israel trip. I also attended the Exponential church planting conference in Florida. Dr. Thompson's leadership and availability at certain times was also invaluable in helping with issues in the program, especially as I grappled with some misunderstandings of what SMP was.

The last class, led by Prof. Jon Furgeson on Pastoral Leadership, was immense, as much for the reading content, which provided tools to use in future ministry, as the structure of the class, which allowed sharing and discussion with my colleagues along with input from a gifted practitioner. It was also a blessing to be led by the exceptional Prof. Bob Sundquist in Preaching II, again leaving us with invaluable tools for future use and transforming our preaching style to be flexible and impactful.

There were, sadly, limited courses on mission, and perhaps in the ongoing review, more attention should be given to apologetics and mission outreach that applies to new pastors coming into a rapidly changing church and culture. (I also attended seminary in my native England, where the course structure has been adjusted to take into account this changing environment.) But, classes with a focus on building up confidence in Lutheran belief (in my case, as someone from a non-Lutheran background), and in the Scriptures were the greatest help. The third year is tough, as we studied both Old and New Testament, but the teaching was invaluable. As is the cohort we were assigned to. We still meet online to discuss, pray, fellowship, and chat together.

Andy Greer, Messiah Lutheran Church and School, Lincoln, NE

Messiah Lutheran is a church and school in Lincoln, NE. We have a large congregation that gathers for three worship services on Sunday mornings. On Wednesday nights, our Sunday School, confirmation, middle school, high school, and adult Bible studies take place. We focus on faith, family, friends (witness/outreach) and finances (stewardship) for our adult offerings. We just opened a new Early Childhood Development Center that has our highly respected preschool program embedded into it. We also have a thriving/growing kindergarten through fifth grade program.

Our mission statement is simple: Love God. Love Others. Share Christ. We believe in gathering around God's Word so that, transformed by it, we may scatter to witness in our communities and to the ends of the earth. We reference Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18 as we focus on being a training ground for transformational discipleship and Acts 2:42-47 in being a launching pad for community engagement/outreach.

Our ministry leaders and congregation members work diligently to meet the needs of the community and partner in mission throughout the United States and the world. Messiah feels so strongly about this that in 2017 they voted as a congregation to extend a call to an Associate Pastor for Community Outreach. This pastor would provide leadership and oversight to intentionally encourage the Body of Christ to engage in mission, witness, and outreach. This encouragement would go beyond the church congregation and extend to the school families as well.

We are passionate about generously giving our time, skills, material goods, and finances to meet the needs of people and as means of sharing Jesus in our own community and around the world. The following is a list of our ministries and partnerships:

- We support missionaries in nine different countries.
- We partner with a Christian Heritage program called Families Together, where we train families to look after children so parents can get the help and support they need to keep children from entering the social support system.
- Our Common Threads ministry partners with the international missions Days for Girls, Orphan Grain Train and the local mission People's City Mission to provide highly demanded human care needs through sewing, assembling, and distributing items through the work of over 370 volunteers.
- We helped bring in, house, and equip a ten-person Afghan family during the refugee efforts, partnering with Lutheran Family Services.
- We partner with Royal Family Kids camp to care for children affected by neglect, abuse, and abandonment in Lincoln.
- We began our own ministry called Home in a Box that partners with the community to furnish homes for single mothers and others that need a restart or help overcoming homelessness.
- We partner closely with Mercy Meals to send thousands of meals all over the world to people in need.
- Our disaster relief team continues to rebuild houses in Nebraska from past flooding and goes all over the country for various tornado and hurricane relief efforts.
- We partner with area schools to provide coats, hats, and scarves before the winter months in Nebraska.
- We engage in witness and outreach to the Winnebago tribe in our state.
- We actively support the University of Nebraska Lutheran Chapel.

The SMP program has provided a way not only to form/prepare a future pastor but has also provided a vicar immediately to learn and serve with our ACTS (Acclaiming Christ Through Service) and other missions teams that currently carry out these efforts. While I am here as boots on the ground, I am also able to learn God's Word and practical theology to care for not only those we serve but also for those that are serving. It aids in pastoral care and teaching as we gather to hear God's Word, so that we can scatter and be witnesses while we serve. The courses Teaching the Faith and the Master Narrative have specifically helped me to better understand the fruit of the Spirit (sanctification) that flows out of God's grace. Not only can I better understand it, but I can help others understand it as we pray and serve together. Though we have several great missions and service efforts underway, the SMP Program has added pastoral support to our team ministry. Personally, it has allowed me to understand the systems it takes to be the hands and feet of Christ, reaching and including as many people as possible.

The on-the-job training will pay dividends for years to come, and the SMP Program makes that uniquely possible.

Conclusion

In keeping with the theme of this issue, this contribution has explored some ways that this contextual program of pastoral formation provides theological education at a seminary level alongside the work and ministry of students engaged in mission. These stories represent the wider work being accomplished by the many pastors serving in the LCMS in a variety of contexts. Through each of the pastoral formation programs offered in our church body, the intersection of mission and ministry is always in the forefront. As a church, we continue to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send out workers into the harvest fields. We give thanks that Chad, Art, Martin, and Andy have heeded the call, and we celebrate those who follow in their steps.

Lutheran Mission Matters

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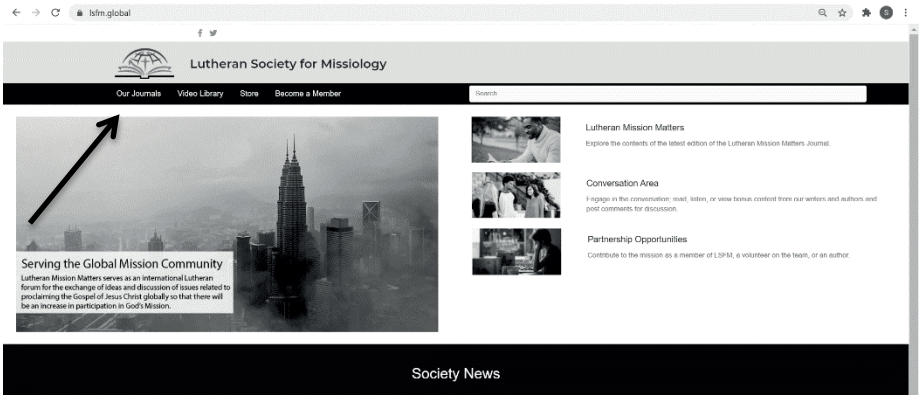
Note our website has a new look. Same URL.
We will be adding some new features soon.



Every issue, PDFs are available online of the entire journal and of individual articles. These PDFs already have the copyright permissions and are ready to duplicate and share to help promote good missiology within the church.

Use these articles to study and discuss in study groups, Winkles, conferences, workshops, or in the classroom.

Find the articles online (https://lsfm.global) under “Our Journals” tab.

Reviews

WE ARE NOT THE HERO: A Missionary's Guide to Sharing Christ, Not a Culture of Dependency. By Jean Johnson. Sisters, Oregon: Deep River Books, 2012. 321 pp. Paperback. $15.99

In this book Johnson looks at what missions in different cultures can be. She was a missionary for many years in Cambodia. She is fluent in the language, having served Cambodians in the Twin Cities for six years. In Cambodia she discovered that, along with Jesus, she brought her own culture with her. She recognized that Western-style mission work brings baggage along with the Gospel, which isn't necessary and can even be harmful. Her new approach mirrors how Paul went about mission work.

A line near the very end of the book made me think and wonder. On page 320, Johnson writes, "God is not an absentee God. Missionaries do not bring God to a people. God is already present there working. Our role is to find out how and to join the conversation."

Missionaries often bring along resources to inspire people to join in the ministry. Johnson found out the hard way that she was creating a dependency. Here are her words on page 76: "When I use resources and methods local believers cannot easily reproduce, I create a roadblock for them. I make them feel powerless because they cannot do ministry 'like Jean.' As a result, local believers will often give up or find a missionary to do the work."

Johnson also writes about her findings regarding how to begin new congregations or groups of believers. Instead of bringing the one's own music, liturgy, and worship style to the new culture, missionaries should ask questions according to the Bible about how to worship in a God-pleasing way in that culture. On page 12, she shares some questions to facilitate believers:

- According to biblical examples, in what ways did faith communities or people worship God?
- According to biblical examples, what attitudes did worshipers exemplify?
- According to biblical examples, how did worshipers displease God?
- According to Cambodian culture, how do you show respect and adoration?
- According to the Bible and Cambodian culture, how do you want to worship?
- What gifts and resources do you have within you and around you that you could use to worship?

We often want to give quick answers and easy solutions to get a ministry moving faster, but doing so puts us in charge. Asking questions, encouraging, and giving support permits congregations to be in charge of their own ministries from the beginning.

Johnson shares a lot in the book about avoiding dependency and working toward sustainability. When all the giving is one way, besides making people dependent, it makes them feel poor and incapable. As Johnson was learning, she read the following from a mission report: "'Don't assume that we are poor and have nothing to give. When you do that, you insult God and diminish our ability to participate.'" (p. 132). It is possible that when the missionary does a lot of the main work, local people may come away thinking they can never do it as well as the missionary.

Another section of the book stresses that many cultures are oral cultures. If pastors deliver sermons in Western-style lectures, many people in different cultures have trouble listening. They would, however, be able to listen to stories or music or poetry or proverbs or drama. Does it really matter how Jesus is shared? The message should be clear, understood, and further spread. We want the message of Jesus to be remembered and shared with others. To do this, the message must be appropriate for the culture and people. On page 154, Johnson shares the following: "If we are to affirm and equip the approximately four billion oral learners through the world, we need a good dose of missionaries who intentionally understand and prepare their communication strategies for oral cultures. This is the only way we will truly fulfill the Great Commission of making disciples of all nations." More of our pastors, even in the US, need this. When people in oral cultures hear a story about Jesus and maybe even repeat it together, they will be excited to go out and share it more. This is called discipling and easily follows storytelling.

On page 180, Johnson notes the importance of new believers staying in their home communities. That is what Jesus told the young man in the Bible who wanted to follow Jesus. He was told to go back and share with his community and family. If a person becomes too Western, he or she may not be trusted by the community. If that person believes in Jesus and shares stories about Jesus without the cultural baggage, discipling can happen. On the same page, Johnson writes, "For many, becoming a Christian is interpreted as forsaking one's nationality to become a different nationality while still living in one's homeland."

Johnson writes about an indigenous theology on page 227. One example she uses is that in Western thinking, persecution is something that we Christians often think it is good to avoid. People in many indigenous cultures, however, see the biblical truth that persecution for a Christian is unavoidable and should be anticipated. Johnson notes that in Matthew 5:11–12, "Jesus says that the persecuted are blessed and should rejoice for the honor." It makes sense that people looking in the Bible see persecution as a given.

This book gives much food for thought. Johnson wants the message of God's love in Jesus, not material blessings, to bring people to faith. She also doesn't want people to lose their culture in order to be able to worship God. It took her many years to understand missions in another culture and that everything done on day one makes a

difference. There is much to learn and talk about in this book. It is good to remember again that this is all God's ministry, and He was there before us, getting it all ready.

Miriam Carter

TEACHING AND LEARNING THEOLOGY IN THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT. By Matthew C. Ogilvie. Perth, Australia: Novum Organum Publications, 2015. Kindle, $5.00.

Novum Organum Publications is an endeavor to produce academic materials in a format that is easily distributed via open access or at low cost. In the US, the book is only available from Amazon in Kindle format.

Currently, many books have been written about distance education. The emphasis varies from book to book, but all deal with the same educational possibility. The advent of the internet, however, has opened educational possibilities that have not existed previously.

Dr. Matthew C. Ogilvie is an Australian Roman Catholic who has served as Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, Australia, and for five years (2009–2014) served in the US as Dean of Philosophy and Theology at the University of Dallas, a Roman Catholic school. In addition to his continuing institutional involvement, he has been actively involved in efforts to teach and learn theology in an online environment.

Ogilvie is fair in his presentation of the advantages and disadvantages of both residential and distance education. His central concern is the difference between the transfer of what he calls "theological information" and the process that he calls "theological formation." Theological information is the information that can be obtained from books, lectures, and other sources. This kind of information is important and a necessary part of theological education, but preparation for ministry involves much more than knowledge of a certain number of facts.

The truly important part of preparation for ministry involves theological formation. For Ogilvie, the goal is to "(i) engage students in the active pursuit of understanding and (ii) facilitate an active mediation between faith and culture/s" (Kindle Location 405). In other words, theological formation involves keeping students actively involved in word and deed by discovering and using the information they have mastered to build the necessary bridges between theological truth and the daily lives of believers.

An important question for the discussion then becomes, Is it better for theological formation to take place within a residential community of scholars and their students alone, or is it better if students are formed in the midst of the contexts that will actually be part of their continuing ministry? Information can be transferred anywhere, but where are the conversations best held where theological formation will take place? In Ogilvie's view, valid theological formation cannot be assumed on a residential campus any more than its absence can be assumed in a distance course.

Ogilvie is at pains to show that his ideas about distance education are not simply his own opinions but are ideas derived from and supported by rigorous, published

research. The book is not an easy read in the sense that the reader is continually referred to specific books and research papers (and since the book is presented in an electronic form, the links will frequently take the reader to the original article if desired), but since he is proposing an innovation, he recognizes the importance of demonstrating that his proposal stands within a recognized academic tradition.

Of course, this book is nearly ten years old now, and the blizzard of studies about the use of distance education in theological formation continues. The results generally are not different, but the research is repeated and refined. To put it in general terms, students in distance courses generally are satisfied with their instruction, feel that they learned as much away from campus as they learned on campus, received value for money on their investment, generally feel connected to their teachers and classmates, and most importantly, are willing to continue in their programs until they reach their goals.

Of particular interest in our present Lutheran situation is that distance education programs make preparation for ministry possible for students who otherwise would have no opportunity. Ogilvie is well aware that a host of problems including financial, cultural, racial, work, family, etc. prevent men who want to serve as pastors from pulling up stakes to move to a residential institution. The question is, Can the church find a way to use its available resources? For the most part, people who have chosen to be involved in distance education programs have their own valid reasons for not choosing to be a part of residential education.

Following other researchers, Ogilvie characterizes an online learner as a person who (1) has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning, (2) has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning, (3) has learning needs closely related to changing social roles, (4) is problem-centered and interested in immediate application of knowledge, and (5) is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors (Location 702). Fortunately, God has blessed Lutheran congregations with no lack of such people.

This is an interesting read to prepare for changes that are inevitably coming. The Association of Theological Schools (the accrediting agency for seminaries in the US and Canada) has given approval for more than 200 seminaries to make use of varying levels of distance education techniques in their programs. (This includes the two Missouri Synod seminaries and virtually all other Lutheran seminaries in the US.) Almost all-American seminaries are looking at various ways to incorporate at least some aspect of distance education to improve and expand their programs.

The need for ministry is not negotiable. Ministry is a gift of the Lord to His people, and the methods of preparation for that task must be carefully considered. However, the means of preparing ministers for the task of ministry *is* negotiable. The Lord of the Church did not mandate either the course of instruction or the institutions needed to prepare for ministry. Seminaries were not created as an answer to the Church's need

for ministerial formation until the Early Modern period, and Luther himself taught in the hurly-burly of a newly created university, not a seminary. Now the Church needs to search out answers to fulfill its need for ministry in a very different Post-Modern world. It has fantastic resources in its seminaries, who are already involved in the search for a more excellent ministry, and as Ogilvie makes clear, it is surrounded by a host of new opportunities.

Daniel Mattson

VIABILITY IN CONTEXT: The Theological Seminary in the Third World—Seedbed or Sheltered Garden? By Herbert M. Zorn. Bromley, Kent, England: The Theological Education Fund, 1975. 108 pp. Paperback. OUT OF PRINT, but available in seminary libraries worldwide and can be obtained through inter-library loan.

I stumbled into this little treasure trove while researching some mission history. As happens more frequently than I'd like to admit, here was a study that already answered a host of questions that have churned in the back of my mind for years. Further to my embarrassment, I came to realize that the book had already been reviewed, at least once, by our own Dan Mattson in this very journal (see *Missio Apostolica* 23 no. 2, November 2015, 375–379). So, this little exercise is a reminder that we often know much less than we think we know, and what's more, that much of what we'd like to know is already known to others if we only look and listen.

Dan Mattson's review is far better than I can summarize, but in short, Zorn studied the development of theological and pastoral education in the young mission churches of Asia, Africa, and Latin America now a full generation ago (early 1970s). His analysis covers a host of pragmatic but very real factors as well as the theological impetus of both pastoral ministry and aggressive mission and outreach, all within the parameters of appropriate social, cultural, and economic factors. These latter parameters are important in harnessing the help of external forces (i.e., largely Western missionaries and money) in ways that avoid the lingering temptations toward colonialist efforts or building dependencies. His basic metaphor is that of a greenhouse in which young plants are nurtured, but if this becomes a "sheltered garden" that cannot be sustained within the hostile environment of the real world then the plants will likely fail. Zorn's own service as an LCMS missionary in India for twenty-five years, seventeen of which were at the seminary of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church in Nagercoil, spanned the early years of the post-colonial period. He understood the problems that occurred when Western seeds of ideas that were planted in such sheltered gardens were then expected to take root in other cultural soils. Sadly, though it has been fifty years since the publication of this study, we still witness these same forces and factors establishing forms that are unsustainable without a steady influx of outside money.

Zorn is not against full-bodied seminaries. Quite the opposite. But he provides a map to get there by building ownership and sustainability from within the indigenous church, and he actually presents a workable "viability test" for various models. For example, his analysis and detailed statistics reveal certain constants needed to run a full-time school (fixed costs in buildings, overhead, minimal faculty), such as 120 students, eight full-time faculty, a supporting church body of 300,000, and no more than 25% of financial support from sources outside the local church body.

Just that one example, if even only approximately accurate, should provide some realistic considerations for mission planting supported by viable mission planning. Of course, the Holy Spirit gives the growth, but God has also provided us with social science resources that fall within the ministerial use of our reason. Like all human agencies, when ministerial becomes magisterial, we lose our theological moorings very quickly. But such misuse should not negate the helpful use of such resources.

Zorn's work was funded by the Theological Education Fund (TEF) of the World Council of Churches. This in itself might raise questions in many of our circles, but he was working when such "cooperation in externals" allowed for those in the broader theological world to recognize the abilities of an LCMS missionary like Herbert Zorn, who was actually "seconded" to the TEF for the 2.5 years of the study. The research and analysis, of course, are grounded in the realities of God's created order, coupled with the solid theological foundation of being wise and careful stewards of God's gifts.

The study concludes that no approach can work as a "one size fits all" model. Zorn also offers a very helpful evaluation of the spectrum that was already available in his world of the 1960's and early 70's. The temptation for Western mission leaders to export "what works for us" remains a very real issue, and, if nothing else, Zorn reminds us to count the cost and at least have some awareness of what it means to bring the message of Christ and to do theology in other cultures.

Dan Mattson's review noted that he first read the book not long after its publication in 1975 and at the beginning of his own ministry and missionary service in African seminaries. At that time, his conclusion was that "no one in the West should make decisions about pastoral education in mission lands without first reading this book." His more recent review in 2015, on the fortieth anniversary of publication, affirmed that this is "an opinion [he] still hold[s] today." My little summary is less a review and more an extended bibliographic notice, not only about this one resource but also about the need for wider discussion of the complexities of pastoral-missional formation in today's world. I am only an interested outsider to the study of missiology and leadership in field mission work, but this little book, now close to its fiftieth anniversary of publication, seems as relevant in today's conversations as ever.

Andrew H. Bartelt

Lutheran Mission Matters Call for Papers November 2023

Encounter of Culture and Christian Mission

The editorial committee of *Lutheran Mission Matters* (*LMM*) invites you to submit an article for the November 2023 issue on the chosen theme, "Encounter of Culture and Christian Mission."

How do we faithfully navigate the relationship between Gospel and culture? Where can we do more to embrace the influences of local cultures on the practices of the Church? Where can we do more to critique our cultural contexts through the truth of God's Word? In the November issue of *Lutheran Mission Matters*, we invite submissions that engage these questions in theory and in practice.

Christianity has always existed in cultures; there is no a-cultural Christianity because there are no a-cultural human beings. God's creative work, Christ's incarnation, and the Spirit's ongoing activity in the Church of every time and place bears witness to the contextual and cultural nature of the Christian faith. This brings forth several theological and ecclesial tensions, including the tension between the "transcultural" and the "contextual," as well as the tensions between "commandeering culture" (neocolonialism), "integrating" culture (inculturation), and "capitulating" to culture. Postmodern influences on cultural coherence and identity have further nuanced these tensions, sometimes for better, sometimes for worse.

Throughout the God-designed and God-governed passage of time and in every place in His creation, God has accompanied His human creatures, relating to them in wrath and judgment as well as the re-creative expression of His mercy and lovingkindness in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In every historical circumstance, the unchanging God is present with the ever-changing course of human history as it unfolds the blessings of the Creator, who continues to provide for His creation and protect His human creatures in the face of all evil. We invite scholars steeped in this reality to contribute to this issue, offering diverse practical, academic, and theological perspectives in the engagement of theology and culture.

You are invited to submit articles, studies, or observations about "Encounter of Culture and Christian Mission." *Lutheran Mission Matters* is a peer-reviewed publication available online at https://www.lsfm.global and in the Atlas (American Theological Library Association Serials) database or as printed journals. The journal is in its thirtieth year of publication.

LMM articles are generally up to 3,000 words in length, although longer articles will be considered. The deadline of September 15 is negotiable. Articles dealing with aspects of the theology and practice of Lutheran Mission other than this issue's theme will be considered for publication, space permitting. Send your ideas and questions to the editor of the journal, Dr. Victor Raj (rajv@csl.edu), with a copy to the editorial assistant at assistanted@lsfm.global.

If you wish to submit a manuscript, please consult our submission guidelines found at the back of the journal or here: https://www.lsfm.global/our-journals/.

Please let us know soon of your willingness to be part of this publishing effort.

Submission Guidelines

We welcome your participation in writing for *Lutheran Mission Matters*. Please observe the following guidelines for submission of manuscripts.

Lutheran Mission Matters publishes studies of missiological issues under discussion in Christian circles across the world. Exegetical, biblical, theological, historical, and practical dimensions of the apostolic mission of the church are explored in these pages. (See the mission statement below.) While issues often focus on a theme, the editorial committee encourages and appreciates submissions of articles on any missiological topic.

Contributors can familiarize themselves with previous issues of *Missio Apostolica* and *Lutheran Mission Matters* at the Lutheran Society for Missiology's website (https://lsfm.global). Click on Our Journals to view PDFs of previous issues.

Book reviews: LSFM also welcomes book reviews. Submit reviews of no more than 500 words. E-mail Dr. Joel Okamoto (bookreviews@lsfm.global) if interested in writing a review.

Mission Statement

Lutheran Mission Matters serves as an international Lutheran forum for the exchange of ideas and discussion of issues related to proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ globally.

Formatting and Style

Please consult and use *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th edition for endnotes. See basic examples below and/or consult the "Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide" (http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html).

[1] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 243–255.

[2] Hans Küng, *Does God Exist? An Answer for Today*, trans. Edwin Quinn (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 184–186.

[3] Robert J. Priest, Terry Dischinger, et al., "Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement," *Missiology, An International Review* 34 (2006): 431–450.

References to Luther's works must identify the original document and the year of its publication. Please use the following model.

[4] Martin Luther, Ninety-five Theses (1517) in *Luther's Works*, ed. Harold J. Grimm (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 31:17–34.

Quotations of or allusions to specific texts in the Lutheran Confessional writings must be documented. The use of modern translations of the *Book of Concord* is encouraged. Please use the following model.

[5] Augsburg Confession V (Concerning the Office of Preaching) in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran* Church, ed. R. Kolb, T. J. Wengert, C. P. Arand (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 40.

Direct quotations exceeding four manuscript lines should be set off from the text in an indented paragraph, without quotation marks. Omissions in a quotation should be noted by ellipsis, with an additional period to end a sentence, as appropriate.

Spelling should follow the latest edition of *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*. Words in languages other than English should be italicized.

Preparation and Submission

Length: Concise, clear articles are preferred. Manuscripts should not be more than 3,000–4,000 words although longer pieces may be arranged by the editor.

Content: *Lutheran Mission Matters* is committed to addressing the academic community as well as pastors and people throughout the church and involving them in the theology and practice of mission. Use of terms or phrases in languages other than the language of the article itself is discouraged. The use of complex and long sentences is discouraged. Attention should be paid to paragraphing so that the article is easy to follow and appears inviting on the page.

Use of call-outs: *Lutheran Mission Matters* frequently uses call-outs to break up blocks of text on a page and to emphasize important points being made in the article. The author is invited to use Word's Text Highlight Color to suggest words or phrase that may be included in a call-out. The final decision will be made by the editor.

Format: Please submit articles in single spaced Times New Roman 10-point font with 0.25" paragraph indents.

Submission: Manuscripts should be submitted electronically to Professor Victor Raj, editor@lsfm.global. Submission of a manuscript assumes that all material has been carefully read and properly noted and attributed. The author thereby assumes responsibility for any necessary legal permission for materials cited in the article. Articles that are inadequately documented will be returned for complete documentation. If the article has been previously published or presented in a public forum, please inform the editor at the time the article is submitted.

Review: The editors submit every manuscript to the editorial committee for examination and critique. Decisions are reached by consensus within the committee. Authors may expect a decision normally within three months of submission. Before publication, articles are copy edited for style and clarity, as necessary. Major alterations will be made available to the author for review.

Additional Submission Information

Bio: Authors should provide, along with their submissions, an autobiographical description. Please write 2–3 sentences introducing yourself. Please include your title(s) you would like LMM to use, the form of your name you want to be known as. Tell your present position and/or your education or experience that qualifies you to write the article. If you have a head-shot photo that you would like to provide, we will try to use it. Please provide the email address at which a respondent could reach you.

Abstract: Please provide up to a one-hundred-word abstract of your article. The abstract will serve as a first paragraph to provide the reader with the basic intent and content of the article.

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Submission Checklist:

- o Article
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