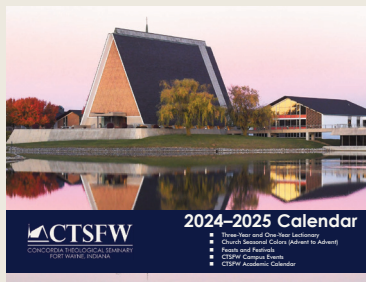




2024–25 CTSFW Wall Calendars Available



The annual CTSFW wall calendar was mailed in November to CTSFW alumni and synod congregations. A limited number of additional calendars are available. To request your calendar(s), please contact Colleen Bartzsch at (260) 452-2150 or Colleen.Bartzsch@ctsfw.edu.

Corrections: Fall 2024 *For the Life of the World*

- Front Cover: The president’s chain of office, which was featured on the cover, includes the seminary’s motto, “Preach the Word,” in Greek, but the Greek is incorrect, with an alpha instead of a lambda in λόγον (*logon*; “word”). It’s time for a new chain of office.
- Back Cover: It’s Nicaea, not Nicea, an error that escaped our notice in the Symposia ad on the back cover.

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture verses are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

FEATURES

4 Talking to People About Jesus

James Woelmer

We plant and we water, but only the Holy Spirit causes faith to be created through the Gospel (1 Cor. 3:6; 12:3). Our job is simply to be faithful in the proclamation of God’s Word.

7 The Confident Confession and Pastoral Formation

Todd A. Peperkorn

One of the characteristics we instill in our future pastors is confidence in our confession of faith, which comes from knowing who you are in Christ, what you are there to do, and having the capacity to do it. Field experiences play a central role in building this confidence.

10 Equipping College Students to Live Confident in Christ

Jared DeBlieck

As a campus pastor at a public university, I strive to catechize my students to see the world for what it is—a place lost to itself in a spiritual nosedive, spinning out of control at an alarming rate. My aim is to encourage confidence in our doctrine and practice, to better equip their belonging in Christ here.

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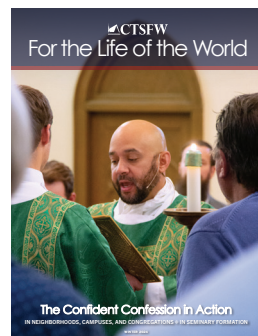
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30 Bible Study: The Confident Confession

On the Cover

The Rev. Matthew Wietfeldt, Assistant Vice President of Admission and Christ Academy Director at CTSFW, reads the Gospel lesson in a Divine Service at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

(Photo: Steve Blakey)





EQUIPPING COLLEGE STUDENTS TO LIVE CONFIDENT IN CHRIST

*Our confident confession is in the Lord's hands,
and with his Word it will not return void.*

By Jared DeBlieck

Today the Church, particularly in the West, has seen the rising stagnation of believers. A Gallup poll reported that in the United States, belief in God has dropped from 87% in 2017 to 81% in 2022.¹ That same year, Pew Research modeled the future of religion in America as overwhelmingly secular in its current trajectory. The study focused on the key demographic, 15- to 29-year-olds, as the age range in which religious switching most often takes place. In particular, “31% of Americans who were raised as Christians become religiously unaffiliated—a group that includes atheists, agnostics or those who describe their faith as ‘nothing in particular.’”²

The youth and young adults who spend time in this spiritual wilderness wander grievously, not only critiquing religion but often on a mission against the world where faith exists. This is post-modernity. Born again in the image of influencers, the adolescent spiritual impulse is, reflexively, to destroy the old and erect the different—different values, practices, and lifestyles. Even while their world has touches of the old world, it strives toward an ambiguity of indiscriminate features that are neither normed nor common. The current debates over gender fluidity and abstract beauty come to mind.

These statistics are noticeable when comparing students who are confident in their Lutheran confession to their campus peers. Among the religiously unaffiliated going off to college, fidelity to God's Word is more of a mystery than the devotion to biological impossibilities. However, I detect an even more disastrous feature that even our good Christian young adults have trouble combating. The ivory tower of academia does a great job of keeping any number

of Christian beliefs in muted submission. Opposing views, especially from the churched, are intolerable heresies. It should be no surprise when our catechized go off to college and turn and adopt the approved religion of the contemporary world. Students want to belong; therefore, it is imperative that parents and pastors work together to foster a Christ-centered college experience.

As a campus pastor to a public university, I strive to catechize my students to see the world for what it is—a place lost to itself in a spiritual nosedive, spinning out of control at an alarming rate. My aim is to encourage confidence in our doctrine and practice, to better equip their belonging in Christ here. When they leave college, I want them to be a blessing for their congregation wherever they end up. I want Jesus' death and resurrection to be as real for them as biology, engineering, or agronomy. I urge them to see the world as changing, but Christ as the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8).

It is an ongoing challenge for them and their peers, as God is often relegated to the mythos of a former era that is no longer. Students are tempted by a new proselytization taking place, an anti-gospel, a de-crucified Christ, a post-Christianity.

“The confident confession in action within a campus ministry is not unlike any other Lutheran church that desires faith and faithful living.”



Photos: Chad Hoover/Concordia Lutheran High School

Left: The Rev. Jared DeBlieck, senior pastor of University Lutheran Church in West Lafayette, Indiana, gives a presentation at Concordia Lutheran High School (CLHS) in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Right: DeBlieck preaches in chapel at CLHS.

The Christian message is not just losing its influence but is considered categorically debunked. Post-Christianity (a term often overused and underdefined, yet nonetheless useful) marks a significant shift in societal beliefs, motivations, and practices away from the teachings of Jesus Christ. In areas of its prevalence, specifically the European West, it signals a near or even utter irrelevance of Christian beliefs in decision making, even if individuals maintain formal church memberships (i.e., state church affiliations). The term highlights the transition from a society where belief in God was widely accepted to one where it is merely one option among many. Again, this shift is particularly significant in Europe, where Christianity was once the dominant religion. The United States is following a similar path and may soon reach that threshold. The need for a confident confession on our college campuses is clear and pressing, and the current de-Christianization among college students warrants a concurrent response by the church.

Recently, I had the pleasure of visiting Concordia Lutheran High School in Fort Wayne. I drove out to preach at their chapel, visit with the Christian Leadership class, and present to students during their lunch hour. Many of the students indicated they were headed to one of our Concordias; a similar number chose Purdue, IU, and other state schools. They were curious about our campus church and what it was like. Did anyone attend? What does it look like? Basically, why should I go there if I go to Purdue?

I did not quote the statistics that they were in the vulnerable age range of becoming religiously unaffiliated or explain the technical features of secularization. They intuitively feel these things, even as they may be unaware of their persuasion. Instead, I told them who we are. Our confident confession in action is most pronounced in its simplicity. At University Lutheran Church in West Lafayette, we are biblical, confessional, liturgical, and

Lutheran. We live out our baptismal identity in Divine Services, Bible studies, and prayer. Our life together begins weekly at the Lord's Table and extends into the Sunday night family meal. Our discussions include formal studies and pastoral care, table talks, and impromptu deep dives. We pray together and play together, and we serve God and neighbor, devoting ourselves to each other's needs and to those who do not know Christ as we know him.

The confident confession in action within a campus ministry is not unlike any other Lutheran church that desires faith and faithful living. As Christianity's influence dwindles in the West, culture ventures into unknown frontiers. Fostering faith-filled relationships and belonging, particularly within church communities, is the way forward for the formation of religiously affiliated children through their young adulthood, and beyond. The post-Christian landscape is ultimately in God's hands, so what lies before us is the godly use of those relationships that he has put in front of us. Confidence is faith (*con + fides*), and faith is born anew by the Spirit. Let us rejoice then that our confident confession is in the Lord's hands, and with his Word it will not return void! 🏰



The Rev. Jared DeBlieck is senior pastor of University Lutheran Church in West Lafayette, Indiana, and a PhD in Missiology candidate at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.

- 1 Jeffery M. Jones, "Belief in God in U.S. Dips to 81%, a New Low" *Gallup Poll*, n.d., accessed February 20, 2023, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/393737/belief-god-dips-new-low.aspx>.
- 2 Alan Cooperman, "Religious 'Switching' Patterns Will Help Determine Christianity's Course in U.S.," *Pew Research Center*, n.d., accessed October 20, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/09/29/religious-switching-patterns-will-help-determine-christianity-course-in-u-s/>.