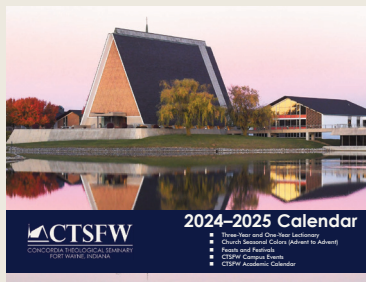




## 2024–25 CTSFW Wall Calendars Available



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](mailto: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.

## FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD

WINTER 2024 VOL. 28, NO. 4

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*For the Life of the World* is published by Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 6600 N. Clinton St., Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825. No portion of this publication may be reproduced without the consent of the editor of *For the Life of the World* by email at [FLOW@ctsfw.edu](mailto:FLOW@ctsfw.edu) or (260) 452-3153. Copyright 2025. Printed in the United States. Postage paid at Berne, Indiana.

**SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION:** *For the Life of the World* is mailed to all pastors and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the United States and Canada and to anyone interested in the work of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. To manage your subscription, please email [FLOW@ctsfw.edu](mailto:FLOW@ctsfw.edu) or call (260) 452-2150.

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

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James Woelmer

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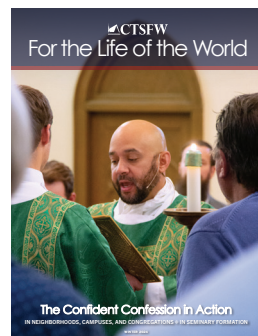
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The Rev. Matthew Wietfeldt, Assistant Vice President of Admission and Christ Academy Director at CTSFW, reads the Gospel lesson in a Divine Service at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

(Photo: Steve Blakey)





# TALKING TO PEOPLE ABOUT JESUS

*To God be all the glory.*

*By James Woelmer*





**W**hen I was a full-time farmer, I told my county agricultural agent that I would be going to the seminary to pursue the pastoral ministry. He said that I will always be planting the seed, meaning that I will always be sowing the Word of God (Luke 8:4-15). Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase (1 Cor 3:6).

Even now, I plant the seed of God's Word and talk to others about Jesus, but it is ultimately God who gives the increase through His Word and Sacraments. We cannot convert anyone, but the Holy Spirit brings people to faith in Christ through the proclamation of the Gospel. To God be all the glory.

In 2023, I accepted the call to Christ Lutheran Church in Manhattan, Kansas, a small church in the middle of a suburb. Since I was new to the area, I took the opportunity to knock on doors and introduce myself and my church to the neighborhood. Many people were friendly and welcomed me to their community. When I asked them what church they attend, they gladly shared what church they belong to.

About thirty percent of the people I talked to attended a church at one time but do so no longer. Some mentioned that they don't go to church anymore because their

**“We cannot convert anyone, but the Holy Spirit brings people to faith in Christ through the proclamation of the Gospel.”**

church has gone “woke,” while others talked about how their church was too legalistic or how they were hurt by false doctrine. In one conversation with a woman who was agnostic, I spoke about the clarity of Holy Scripture and the trustworthiness of the eyewitness testimonies to Christ's bodily resurrection. In another conversation with someone who said that they are spiritual but

not religious, I spoke about the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper for the forgiveness of sins. In my conversations with the unchurched, I always responded by applying the Gospel to each person's background or beliefs. I also kept the conversation focused on Christ—His person and work.

Finally, I gave them information about our church and a copy of Luther's Small Catechism, invited them to our Divine Service, and asked for their name. When I got home, I wrote them a letter thanking them for our visit. I also had my members write letters to the unchurched, inviting them to our Christmas, Holy Week, and Easter services.

Though I have found some who were not interested, I have also found many who were open to hearing the Gospel. When a woman told me that her husband was hospitalized, I visited him at the hospital and again at home. They attended our church the next Sunday. I catechized them, and they eventually joined our church.

During another visit, a man invited me into his home and told me that he was on a waiting list for a lung transplant. We talked about theology, and I prayed with him and gave a house blessing. Another man, who did not grow up in the church, welcomed me back and allowed me to teach him about Jesus.

When I visit mothers with small children, I ask them if their children are baptized. If not, I talk with them about the blessings of Baptism and encourage them to bring their children to the font. I have catechized one couple in their home, and I have visited with fifteen families who previously attended a Lutheran church.

When I walk the neighborhood, I wear my collar to help people recognize that I am a pastor. I don't carry a clipboard because I don't want it to look like I am taking a survey. I simply carry a few Small Catechisms in my pocket and a small notepad for recording information. I have found that forty to fifty percent of households are not home. Instead of leaving information at their door, I make sure to come back to their house later on in order to talk to them in person.

Every three to six months, I visit prospective members again. I ask them how they are doing. We chat for a little while. Then I let them know that I would love to be their pastor and to take care of them with the Gospel. I give them a copy of Sunday's bulletin and my sermon, and I invite them to church.

In the Parable of the Wedding Banquet, the king said to his servants, “Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find” (Matt. 22:9). Just as Philip invited Nathanael to see Jesus (John 1:46), so also am I proactive in inviting people to the Divine Service. I am patient with them, knowing that the “Spirit blows where it wishes” (John 3:8) and that they might come to church according to God's way and time. And when they do, I will recognize them and know their name.

When fellow pastors hear about what is going on in my community, they ask with a little trepidation about how much resistance I get. In truth, it's very little. Even the unchurched are polite. Out of the 872 people I visited, only two opened the door, saw that I am a pastor, and then shut the door. We shouldn't seek persecution but count it all joy if it comes. Jesus has warned us that we will suffer for the sake of the Gospel (Matt. 5:11; John 15:18-21).

I have found great joy in talking with people about repentance and the forgiveness of sins offered to them on

# TALKING TO PEOPLE ABOUT JESUS



Photos: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod/ERIC M. Lunsford

account of Christ’s death and resurrection. Unfortunately, modern evangelism efforts focus on people’s subjective feelings (i.e., what Jesus means to me) rather than on the objective work of Christ for the salvation of mankind. They talk about their church’s programs rather than Christ as our Savior from sin.

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. We are not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe (Rom. 1:16). The Gospel has the power to convert from unbelief to faith in Christ.

Visiting people at their homes might be easier in some places than in others, but it’s nonetheless an important part of ministry. It’s also important for the pastor to talk to

visitors on Sunday morning and look for ways the church can further the Gospel in their community. In this way, the pastor sets the example for his flock.

Living in a broken world, people are searching for truth and meaning in life. We have what they need, namely, peace in Christ and comfort in the Gospel. It is a joy to talk with people about Christ’s death and resurrection for our salvation. It is a joy to see the Holy Spirit convert people from unbelief to faith in Christ through the Gospel. It is a joy to catechize them and to receive with them the body and blood of Christ at the altar.

To God be all the glory. 🏳️‍🌈



The Rev James Woelmer is pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Manhattan, Kansas.