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Presidential Search Underway

Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr., president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), announced September 28, 2023, that he is retiring from the presidency at the conclusion of the 2023–24 academic year. He will continue to serve CTSFW as a faculty member. To read the full news release, visit ctsfw.edu/news.

A call for nominations for the Seminary’s 17th president will be available this November in Synod publications and at ctsfw.edu.

For the Life of the World

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

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4 Virtues of the Pastoral Office

Geoffrey R. Boyle

We want our pastors to be good, Christian men. And our pastoral ministry students at the Seminary want to be such men. They pray for it, confess their failures, and strive for it again and again. But there’s more to being a pastor—more virtues specific to this calling and this office. I’ve tried to sum up various lists of virtues—both general virtues of the “good man” as well as those specific to the pastoral office—into three somewhat provocative admonitions for students: Don’t be weird. Don’t be weak. Don’t be a jerk. The guys get it.

7 Called to Trust His Word

Daniel P. Fickenscher

We’re not called to be indifferent. (The concerned brother of Matthew 18 is far from that. Perhaps just as great as his desire to protect his brother’s reputation is his persistence.) But we are called to trust that the Word of the Lord will not return to Him empty. It’s not our word. It’s not our wit. It’s not our personality. It’s the Lord who is going to bring sheep back to His flock, souls into His kingdom. Resting on this truth pastors are free to be self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, sober, gentle, and so on.

10 Celebrating Twenty Years of Deaconess Formation

James G. Bushur

Every human being is created to share in the Father’s love for the Son and the Son’s love for his Father. We are made to be loved and to love. “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God . . . because God is love” (1 John 4:7-8). Built on this foundation, deaconess formation boils down to certain fundamental questions. How do we prepare deaconess students to facilitate the bonds of divine love that bind the church together? How do we form students to love the person in front of them no matter the context or the circumstances?

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Virtues of the Pastor

Don't Be Weird. Don't Be Weak.



ral Office

Geoffrey R. Boyle

Don't Be a Jerk.

Virtue simply means “manliness,” or acting like a man (Latin: *Vir*). Among the ancient Greeks, Plato speaks of virtue as “justice,” what it means to be a good man. Justice includes wisdom, temperance, and courage, what St. Ambrose later calls the four cardinal virtues. Three theological virtues were added to them: faith, hope, and love (1 Cor. 13:13). And shortly after Ambrose, the Christian poet Prudentius listed seven virtues to counteract the seven deadly sins—these include chastity, humility, patience, kindness, diligence, temperance, and charity. These are the characteristics of a good, Christian man. These are the characteristics of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

We want our pastors to be good, Christian men. And our pastoral ministry students at the Seminary want to be such men. They pray for it, confess their failures, and strive for it again and again. But there’s more to being a pastor—more virtues specific to this calling and this office. St. Paul lays out some of these virtues in various places, most notably in his first epistle to St. Timothy:

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 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. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall

into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. (1 Tim. 3:1-7)

Many of these qualifications overlap with both the ancient Greek virtues from Plato as well as the theological virtues identified by Ambrose and Prudentius. For example, “sober-minded” recalls both temperance and prudence, and “not quarrelsome” leans heavily upon patience. To “manage one’s household well” requires justice, diligence, prudence, and courage.

These lists of virtues—both the general virtues of the “good man” as well as those specific to the pastoral office—I’ve tried to sum up into three somewhat provocative admonitions for students: Don’t be weird. Don’t be weak. Don’t be a jerk. The guys get it.

Like pornography, “weird” is easier to spot than define. I suppose its opposite, normal, will help us understand. However, by “normal” I certainly don’t mean by the world’s standard. In dogmatics classes the students learn to see Scripture as the

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In dogmatics classes the students learn to see Scripture as the *norma normans* (“norming norm”) and the Lutheran Confessions as the *norma normata* (“normed norm”). That is, when it comes to doctrine, Scripture defines what’s “normal”—anything against that “norm” is rightly called “weird.”

Our Lord Jesus chooses to reveal His power precisely in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9)! It was while we were weak that Christ died for us (Rom. 5:6). And it's in weakness that we reach the weak and make them strong (1 Cor. 9:22; 2 Cor. 12:10). That sort of weakness is certainly virtuous; that's what our Lord is like.



Photo: Erik M. Lunsford/The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Our Lord isn't "nice" or "safe" either. He's the King. He alone is to be feared, "lest His wrath be quickly kindled and you perish in the way" (Ps. 2:12). But He isn't a jerk. His acts are just. His speech is tempered. He knows what to say to whom and when, and "He does all things well" (Mark 7:37). Our students strive for that temperate way of prudence and discretion.

norma normans ("norming norm") and the Lutheran Confessions as the *norma normata* ("normed norm"). That is, when it comes to doctrine, Scripture defines what's "normal"—anything against that "norm" is rightly called "weird." So, the pastor judges himself against the "norm" of Christ and His Word in what he says and does, how he preaches and teaches and conducts himself in this world. It's no wonder that the world will then see him as a bit strange: "For you bring some strange things to our ears" (Acts 17:20).

With Christ as the "norm," we see what it means to be a good, Christian man as well as a faithful pastor. "Weird" can then be defined by what Christ is not, such as effeminate, unsociable, unduly awkward, unrelatable, and grotesque. Looking at St. Paul's list for the overseer, the charge to not be weird includes being "above reproach," "respectable," and "being well thought of by outsiders." A fruitful reading to this end is Rev. Jeffrey Hemmer's *Man Up! The Quest for Masculinity* (Concordia Publishing House, 2017). In class we discuss not only how to relate socially among our congregants, but also what this entails for our private lives and our conduct as good, Christian men.

Any admonition against weakness requires careful deliberation and distinction. Our Lord Jesus chooses to reveal His power precisely in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9)! It was while we were weak that Christ died for us (Rom. 5:6). And it's in weakness that we reach the weak and make them strong (1 Cor. 9:22; 2 Cor. 12:10). That sort of weakness is certainly virtuous; that's what our Lord is like.

The weakness that I warn students against, however, is the weakness whose opposite is courage. It takes great courage to be and remain "the husband of one wife," to be "self-controlled," to "be able to teach" what is true in the face of great adversity, and to suffer the consequences, whatever they may be. St. Paul encourages Timothy: "God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control" (2 Tim. 1:7). It's to this spirit that our pastors must cling when confronted with heresy, with a congregant's request to marry someone of the same sex, with false accusations of bigotry, racism, or any threat from

wokeist talking points. Our pastors must not be weak when a true confession is called for, even as they weakly give their bodies to whatever cross may come. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is our guide in these discussions, urging us in all things to "live not by lies."

Finally, though it shouldn't have to be said, it is the necessary temper to the above: Don't be a jerk. It's easy to confuse masculinity and courage for unkindness and cruelty. St. Paul says that pastors are to be "hospitable" and "not violent but gentle." Part of managing one's own household well includes not exasperating the children by undue use of his authority (Eph. 6:4).

Now, not being a jerk doesn't necessarily mean pastors are merely to be "nice" or "safe." In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Susan asks about Aslan, "'Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.' . . . 'Safe?' said Mr. Beaver. 'Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you.'"

Our Lord isn't "nice" or "safe" either. He's the King. He alone is to be feared, "lest His wrath be quickly kindled and you perish in the way" (Ps. 2:12). But He isn't a jerk. His acts are just. His speech is tempered. He knows what to say to whom and when, and "He does all things well" (Mark 7:37). Our students strive for that temperate way of prudence and discretion. To some, they'll need to cry out with our Lord and the Baptizer, "You brood of vipers!" (Matt. 3:7; 12:34). To others, they'll speak tenderly, sharing Isaiah's preaching of "Comfort, comfort" (Isa. 40:1).

It's not an exhaustive list. That's okay. The Scriptures lay before us who Christ is and what He's like. We want to be like Him, as far as we are able. And where we're not—or simply find that we don't always want to be—our Lord comes with His Word to convict us and forgive us. And as He gives us to share in that life, we rejoice. 🙌

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