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Volume Twenty-Six, Number Four

## CTSFW Wall Calendars

Now Available

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), mailed its 2023 wall calendar to CTSFW alumni and congregations of The Lutheran Church—



Missouri Synod at the beginning of December. A limited number of additional copies are available to individuals and congregations.

### Special features include:

- ✦ Three-Year and One-Year Lectionary
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- ✦ Feasts and Festivals
- ✦ CTSFW Campus Events
- ✦ CTSFW Academic Calendar

To request your calendar(s), please contact Colleen Bartzsch at (260) 452-2150 or Colleen.Bartzsch@ctsfw.edu. There is an \$8.25 mailing charge for quantities of two to 10 calendars.

## For the Life of the World

### PUBLISHER

Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr.  
President

### PUBLISHER ASSISTANT

Carrie M. O'Donnell

### PRODUCTION MANAGER

Colleen M. Bartzsch

### EDITOR

Kristine S. Bruss

### COPY EDITOR

Trudy E. Behning

### ART DIRECTOR

Steve J. Blakey

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*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, Indiana.

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

## FEATURES

### 4 Forming Servants to Teach through Christ-Centered Worship

Paul J. Grime

Kramer Chapel towers above every other building on campus, but it's not just the building that towers over these 190 acres. Given that it is within these chapel walls that God comes among the students, faculty, and staff—not to mention the constant stream of visitors—to nourish them with His life-giving gifts, the worship life of the Seminary community extends well beyond the brief time it occupies in our day. Indeed, through subtle ways it shapes everything we do.

### 7 Forming Servants to Teach through Confessional Theology

Jon S. Bruss

At their ordination, our pastors subscribe—"sign on to"—the same Confessions that every single one of our LCMS congregations accepts. Our congregations, after all, are a place for proclaiming and living out the truth of God's Word, not for trying to discover or reinvent it. Our CTSFW graduates are well prepared to sign on to those Confessions, and to "teach the faithful" accordingly.

### 10 Forming Servants to Teach through Lutheran Community

Gifford Grobien

Community life at CTSFW is rich, participatory, and formative: worship and prayer together; the shared communion of Christ's body and blood; mutual conversation and learning; mentoring and material support. In all these ways the community is built up, and members of Christ's body serve one another. By this way of life students learn not just facts to be communicated, but the shared joys, support, knowledge, and love that come in life together.

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FORMING SERVANTS TO

# Teach Through Confessional Theology

Jon S. Bruss

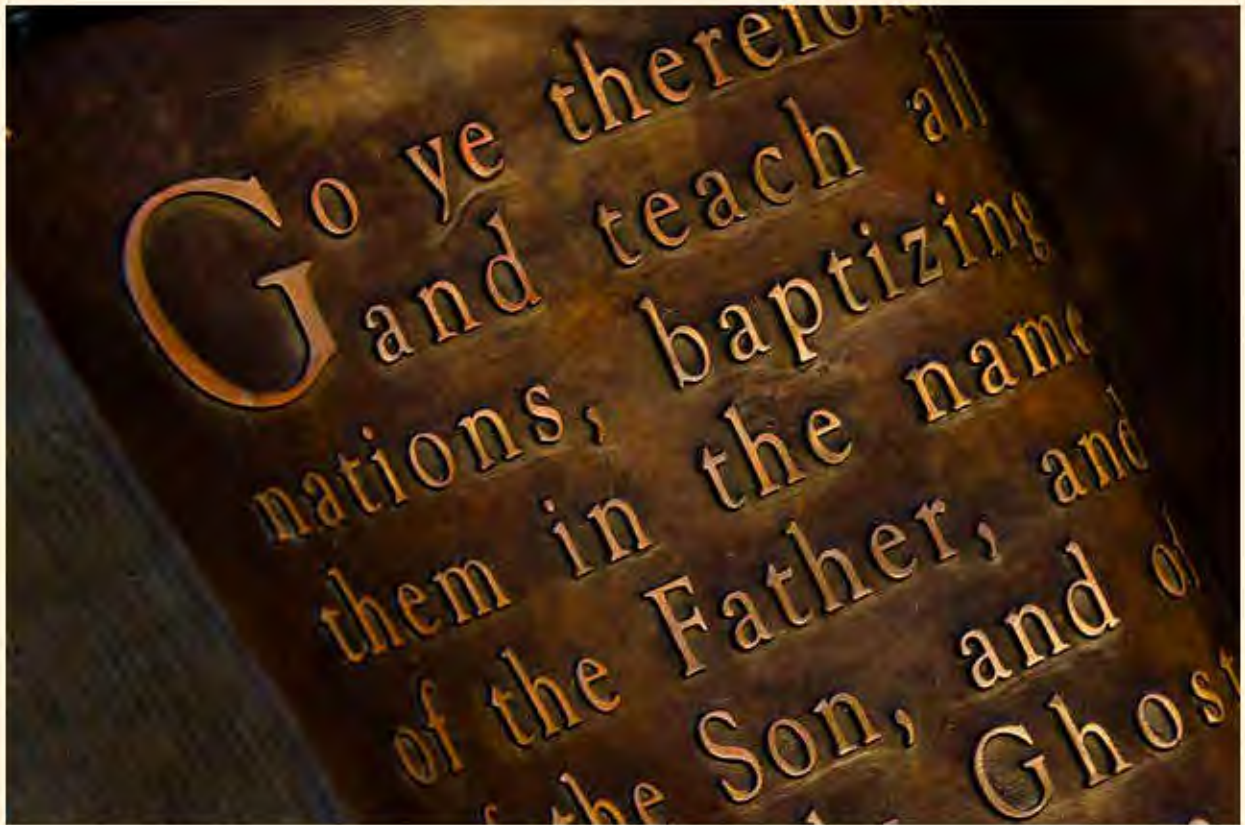


Photo: Erik M. Lunsford/The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

**T**he Holy Christian Church has always distilled the entire teaching of the Scriptures—the norm by which all teaching must be normed—into brief form, often to establish, or at least assert, truth against error.





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All confessions that accurately reproduce the teaching of Scripture, including Peter's, have a value that far exceeds their length. Their power isn't in "their many words," but in their conciseness. They are a guide for teaching and a guide for discerning truth and falsehood. Whoever has them is blessed. Whoever does not must reinvent his faith every day.

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This follows the example of Scripture itself, as we see in the conversation between Jesus and His disciples at Caesarea Philippi in Matthew 16. There Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" The disciples offered various answers: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, other prophets.

Wrong!

Jesus then asked His disciples what *their* confession was. Peter spoke for the group: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God"—the entire content of the Holy Scriptures boiled down to 10 words in English and Greek, maybe five in Aramaic (as I count it). Jesus pronounced a blessing over Peter for his response and revealed for all to hear that this confession was in fact θεόσδοτος (*theosdotos*)—given and revealed by God the heavenly Father Himself. Peter had spoken a "normed norm"—an utterance entirely in harmony with the teaching of the Holy Scriptures because it is *drawn from* the Holy Scriptures, and therefore given and revealed by God.

Indeed, this short truth—"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God"—encapsulates the entire testimony of the Holy Scriptures. In it is wrapped up the first promise to Adam and Eve delivered in Satan's curse, the promise to Noah, the promise to Abraham and to David, the promises in Isaiah of the Suffering Servant, and in Malachi of the "great and terrible day of the LORD." It's an identification of "Son of Man" and "Jesus" and "Son of Mary" and "Christ [Messiah]" and "Son of God," all in one, and a denial that anyone else is any of those.

And it's just 10 words.

Jesus calls Peter's confession the rock on which He'll build His church; the Christian must call it solid gold. It's short enough to remember and packed enough to shape faith and give salvation. It's concise enough not to be confusing, and broad enough to encompass everything said about Christ in the Holy Scriptures.

It's simple enough that a child can say it and incisive enough that theologians can use it—and have used it!—to combat false teaching.

All confessions that accurately reproduce the teaching of Scripture, including Peter's, have a value that far exceeds their length. Their power isn't in "their many words," but in their conciseness. They are a guide for teaching and a guide for discerning truth and falsehood. Whoever has them is blessed. Whoever does not must reinvent his faith every day.

And this is precisely the role our Lutheran Confessions play in the life of our church. At their ordination, our pastors subscribe—"sign on to"—the same Confessions that every single one of our LCMS congregations accepts, including the Apology, the Small and Large Catechisms of Luther, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, and the Formula of Concord. Our congregations, after all, are a place for proclaiming and living out the truth of God's Word, not for trying to discover or reinvent it.

Our CTSFW graduates are well prepared to sign on to those Confessions, and to "teach the faithful" accordingly. In fact, every one of our MDiv graduates is required to take three courses, or nine credits, in the Lutheran Confessions. To give you a sense of how weighty a curricular commitment this is, one commonly used edition of the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church is 660 pages long. That includes footnotes and brief introductions.

So let me break this down. On average, each of the three courses in the Confessions covers roughly 220 pages of material. Courses meet for 10 weeks. That means that roughly 22 pages of the Confessions are covered weekly. Or, to put it in terms of daily class (three times each week), it means that students read the Confessions at a rate of roughly seven pages per class meeting. Of course, this is supplemented by pointed secondary readings. But even those

secondary sources are in the service of making the most of such a pace.

What we're after, after all, is not a glancing acquaintance with our Confessions, but a deep knowledge of them. The pace affords both instructors and students alike what should not be regarded as a luxury, but a necessity: the ability to engage in close reading, to understand the language and categories and arguments of our Confessions, their application to life in the church in 2022 and how they inform teaching, preaching, and practice, and above all,

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Jesus then asked His disciples what *their* confession was. Peter spoke for the group: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God"—the entire content of the Holy Scriptures boiled down to 10 words in English and Greek, maybe five in Aramaic (as I count it). Indeed, this short truth—"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God"—encapsulates the entire testimony of the Holy Scriptures. In it is wrapped up the first promise to Adam and Eve delivered in Satan's curse, the promise to Noah, the promise to Abraham and to David, the promises in Isaiah of the Suffering Servant, and in Malachi of the "great and terrible day of the LORD."

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how they extol Jesus Christ and the redemption in His blood.


This exposure and pace have a huge formative impact. You've heard the saying, "You are what you eat." It means that what goes in either helps or hinders your health. The same is true of reading. Spiritually and intellectually, you are what you read. Read poor material, and it will stultify your mind. Read bad theology, and you'll turn into a bad theologian. Read good stuff but without real attention to what it means, and it's in one ear and out

the other, and a certain deafness toward the good develops.

So you can see, conversely, how the steady diet of our Lutheran Confessions at CTSFW is good eating, slowly digested. This approach yields pastors capable of discerning the important from the unimportant (1 Tim. 4:7) and truth from falsehood (1 John 4:1-6), able and ready to teach and preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) according to the pattern of sound words (2 Tim. 1:13), rightly dividing the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15), and holding forth Jesus Christ in all His redemptive glory as the Savior of sinners (1 Cor. 2:2).

That's a good thing, because what the Holy Christian Church wants—what you want—is Jesus Christ and His gifts, pure and simple. You want them unadulterated by falsehood. And you want them taught and proclaimed with the clarity and vigor that comes from intimate familiarity.

In other words, you want your Lutheran pastor to be deeply formed by scriptural, Lutheran doctrine—not just as some sort of aesthetic nicety, but because what hangs in the balance is the pure teaching and preaching of the Gospel. And your salvation.

So think again about the ordination rite and the pastor's unreserved acceptance of Scripture and the Confessions. At the end of the day, that's what the rite is all about: your salvation. And that's why the Seminary works so diligently and pointedly to use the tools of our Lutheran Confessions to form pastors. The goal is to extol Christ and the true confession of His name, to God's glory and the salvation of sinners. And a key way we do that at CTSFW is by sending forth pastors steeped in our confessional theology—pastors who "hold fast the pattern of sound words." 

*The Rev. Dr. Jon S. Bruss (Jon.Bruss@ctsfw.edu) is Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.*

