

# CONTENTS

Volume Twenty-Eight, Number Two

## IN THIS ISSUE

### 4 Reflections on the Presidency

Two weeks before he retired from the presidency of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr. shared some reflections on the past thirteen years at the helm of CTSFW. “You get to meet people and develop a range of relationships that I couldn’t have imagined before I entered this role,” said Rast. “I’ll probably miss that significantly. Not the traveling—I’ve done enough of that in my life. But working with people, that’s been the best part.”

### 8 God’s Blessings in the Past Years

The list of improvements and blessings to the Seminary over the past thirteen years is long, touching every aspect of formation at CTSFW. The overview on these pages, mirroring a new CTSFW video, “Faithfully Forming Servants,” hits a few of the highlights.

### 11 Bruss to Serve as Seventeenth President of CTSFW

Dr. Jon S. Bruss, who joined the CTSFW faculty in 2022 as associate professor of systematic theology, was called on May 18, 2024, to serve as CTSFW’s new president. He accepted, asking for prayers for himself, his family, “and above all, our seminary, which has been and remains a singularly effective instrument for forming faithful servants of Christ and His Church.”

### Also in this issue:

Faculty News . . . . .	12
Call Day 2024. . . . .	14
Mission Education in the Dominican Republic	18
2024 Commencement . . . . .	20
Serving Christ in Life and in Death. . . . .	22
Seminary Snapshots . . . . .	24
Pilot: New Vicarages and Internships. . . . .	26
Student Awards . . . . .	28
Events Schedule . . . . .	29
In the Word Bible Study. . . . .	30



## For the Life of the World

**PUBLISHER**  
Jon S. Bruss  
President

**EDITOR**  
Kristine S. Bruss

**PUBLISHER ASSISTANT**  
Carrie M. O'Donnell

**PRODUCTION MANAGER**  
Colleen M. Bartsch

**ART DIRECTOR**  
Steve J. Blakey

*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 or (260) 452-3153. Copyright 2024. Printed in the United States. Postage paid at Berne, Indiana.

*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. To manage your subscription, please email FLOW@ctsfw.edu or call (452) 260-2150.

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



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

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

# “What I’ll miss most

**Kristine S. Bruss**

Concordia Theological Seminary is one of God’s great gifts to the Church, and it is the people—the Board, faculty, staff, and, especially, the students—whom God has gathered here who make it such a gift. As we step forward into a new time, we know there will be challenges before us; we know that there are changes we will experience. But one thing never changes, and that is the grace of God in Jesus Christ for each and every one of us.

On May 21, 2011, Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr. was elected and called as president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW). He accepted the call on the spot and began serving just one week later. In his first president’s letter in the July 2011 issue of *For the Life of the World*, Rast wrote about the transition, focusing on God’s guidance in the years ahead.

“Concordia Theological Seminary is one of God’s great gifts to the Church, and it is the people—the Board, faculty, staff, and, especially, the students—whom God has gathered here who make it such a gift,” wrote Rast. “As we step forward into a new time, we know there will be challenges before us; we know that there are changes we will experience. But one thing never changes, and that is the grace of God in Jesus Christ for each and every one of us.”

Rast, who holds an MDiv (1990) and STM (1995) from CTSFW and a PhD from Vanderbilt University in Nashville (2003), was well-prepared for the expected challenges and changes when he took office. He was called to the

faculty of CTSFW in 1996 after serving as a pastor for four years at Ascension Lutheran Church in Madison, Tennessee. Not long after he arrived, he was tapped for administrative duties.

“I was STM supervisor, and in 1998 when Bill Weinrich was elected vice-president of the Synod, he and Dean [Wenthe, then president] asked me to help out,” he recalls. Just a few weeks after that conversation, Weinrich was sidelined with a health issue, and Rast stepped in as acting academic dean for the fall quarter. “[Cameron] MacKenzie was on sabbatical, and Hank [Heino] Kadai took ill, so I was the History Department, as well. It was crazy.”

In 2006, after serving eight years



# THE PRESIDENCY



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

# are the people.”

as assistant academic dean, Rast was named academic dean, a post he says he “enjoyed immensely.” With significant faculty and administrative experience under his belt, he was ideally positioned to take over as president when Dean Wenthe retired.

## **The Central Task: Forming Servants in Jesus Christ**

Rast set his sights early in his presidency on the CTSFW’s mission “to form servants in Jesus Christ to teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all.”

“When I became president, I said one of the things that I’d like to see us do is live more into our mission statement. And the way I framed that was to say, ‘Teach, reach, care. Those are spot on, but the actual verb in this whole thing is form.’ So that was my challenge to myself initially—that, and helping people think a little bit more about the formation at CTSFW.”

At that time, some were questioning the viability of residential pastoral formation in the Missouri Synod. “I came right out of the chute and said,

‘We’re committed to residential pastoral formation. We understand there are going to be exceptional circumstances where you use other tools and that sort of thing, but we’re committed to residential pastoral formation.’” Rast notes that’s still the case today.

What has changed, he says, is our students, whose pre-formation is very different from years past.

“There was a time when you could assume that most of your students were going to have come out of the church in some form or fashion. If they weren’t ‘cradle-to-collar,’ at least they’d been in the church for quite some time and had an idea about how it worked and had experience in it. Not anymore.”

While some CTSFW students still fit the old mold, an increasing number are not lifelong Lutherans; some are not lifelong Christians. They have a deep commitment to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, and they come to CTSFW with that conviction and commitment.

“But they don’t have a lot of experience in how you do it, you know,

within a church body that has a 177-year history,” Rast says with a laugh. “And that can be a little awkward at times because congregations are funny things and seminaries are funny things and synods are really funny things, too.”

These new circumstances—having limited time for formation and a need for greater attention to acculturation—put the onus on professors to think about how to carry out their particular part of the formation process concisely. “You have to be laser sharp on this,” says Rast. “You can’t just say, ‘Oh, they already know all this stuff,’ and just kind of slough it off. You become even more important in the formation process.”

In that regard, he says, the Seminary’s continued efforts to encourage the faculty to think about acting as pastoral mentors all the time—not just as academic advisors, not just as classroom professors, but truly being pastors to future pastors and deaconesses—are key.

“That’s how you’re going to form them,” he says. “That’s how they’re going to be shaped.”

## Ministry Challenges

Just as students have changed, so, too, has the ministry.

“Back when I started, in the early nineties, there were all sorts of assumptions I could make about the people I’d meet,” Rast said. “They’re going to know something about the Bible. If you say Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, they’ll know who you mean.”

Those assumptions are no longer safe to make, says Rast. “With anything you say about the Bible, you’re going to have to do a lot of backfilling and provide a lot of context. You can’t just walk out and say, ‘This is what it is.’”

Rast says pastors can no longer appeal to their office as such, in part due to a loss of respect for clergy. “It’s been horrifying to watch the way the respect for the Office of the Ministry has plunged—for some very good reasons, even if they aren’t our reasons, necessarily. So I always tell the pastoral students, ‘If you have to appeal to your office or your authority, you’re already done. That’s not how you do it. You lead by serving in this regard, rather than by simply pronouncing.’”

“It’s a mindset. It’s a mentality. In formation, it takes some time to find your way through all that.” And that, Rast says, is why residential formation is so important. To have that time on campus, before life in the parish is governed by the relentless rhythm of the church year, is a unique opportunity.

“It’s a time to take advantage of, because you won’t have something precisely like this again. You just won’t.”

That’s what Rast tells students when they’re at the seminary. But first they need to enroll, and recruiting, he says, has been the biggest challenge of the job, marked by ups and downs, including the economic crash of 2008 and a couple of years when not all students were placed immediately.

“We took a little dip at that point in time and worked very hard to address the challenge, and we stabilized. And we’ve remained relatively stable. But it’s a huge challenge. We’ve had great people who have worked incredibly hard to help folks see the opportunities in either pastoral ministry or diaconal ministry, and how they could serve in these kinds of roles that would help the church in really, really important ways.

“Then to do that within the context of a contracting church body as well, a significantly contracting church body, is no small feat. So it’s been a challenge. That one just never goes away.”

## Blessings and Takeaways

There are other challenges of the job, to be sure. There’s the travel-heavy schedule, the never-ending administrative tasks, and countless hours spent with lawyers (which for Rast has been one of the biggest surprises of the job). Those challenges notwithstanding, God has blessed the Seminary in myriad ways during Rast’s thirteen-year run as president, with highlights including a successful capital campaign, significant growth in the endowment, introduction of a full tuition coverage program for

residential students, and completion of the Wayne and Barbara Kroemer Library expansion, a project that started in the Wenthe administration.

“Completing the library renovation was huge,” says Rast. “We had built the shell and completed a portion of it, but the project wasn’t really moving. I looked at it and thought, ‘How are we going to get this thing restarted?’ I remember driving one day between Greensboro and Charlotte, and I got a call from Wayne Kroemer about a matching gift to complete the library. What a great gift from the Kroemers, kind of coming out of the blue! We still had work to do, but that allowed us to ramp things back up.”

The finished project was worth the wait. “It’s a great building,” Rast said. “I could not be more pleased with the way it fits into the architecture, and with its usability and beauty. It’s a home run.”

There have been many other highlights during Rast’s presidency, from significant strategic planning to endowed faculty chairs to new graduate programs, but he’s particularly grateful for the people around him as well as those he’s been able to meet.

He’s thankful for his family for their support during his presidency. He recognizes the importance of having the right people in the administration and bringing on faculty “who are really gifted and committed and wonderful folks.” And it’s been fantastic, he says, to be able to spend time with the people of God.





“You get to meet people and develop a range of relationships that I couldn’t have imagined before I entered this role. I knew a lot of people before, and I did a lot of traveling, but it is exponentially more involved at this point. You don’t know who you’re going to meet, all these really, really interesting people that you probably wouldn’t have the opportunity to meet otherwise.

“I’ll probably miss that significantly. Not the traveling—I’ve done enough of that in my life. But working with people, that’s been the best part.”

He’ll even miss watching people on campus from the president’s office. “The view is very nice, with the chapel up there. I like to sit and watch the people going in and out of the chapel during the course of the day or up on the plaza, with the campus doing what it’s supposed to do, and that is force people to interact with one another.”

He might miss that view, but the people will still be there when he returns from his sabbatical and resumes life as a full-time professor of historical theology. When he does, he’ll bring with him a unique perspective, countless stories to tell, and an unswerving commitment to forming servants in Jesus Christ to teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all. 📖

*Kristine S. Bruss (Kristine.Bruss@ctsfn.edu) serves as chief communications officer at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.*



## A Favorite Scripture Verse



*And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:9–10*

“We’re in a highly polarized culture. People are very good at finding the things that divide us, and that kind of mentality creeps into the church all too frequently. I’ve turned to this text over and over again just to remind myself, ‘That’s not where you want to go,’ because it would be easy to follow that path. But that’s not a helpful path.

“Instead, help people recognize their own gifts and use them for the sake of the proclamation of the Gospel, especially, but for the well-being of the church in general, and then more narrowly for us as a seminary to find ways to work together.”

Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr., President Emeritus



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