

For the Life of the World

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

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Preparing to Share His Story

By Douglas D. Bauman

A Deaconess Story

By Jacqueline A. Duke

The Story Continues

By Joshua R. Gale

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By Douglas D. Bauman

Whatever the seminarian's story is before he enrolls at the seminary, whatever the congregation's story is where he is sent to serve, in the end it's all God's story, His story. The vocation of pastor is not easy. The work is often demanding and the devil's temptations are many and great, but there is no greater joy than serving the people of God with the gifts of God and bringing the Gospel of Christ to those who are in the darkness of sin and unbelief.

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By Jacqueline A. Duke

My admission into the Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS), Fort Wayne, Deaconess Program was not something that I had ever expected. It is, however, a testament to the power of God's living Word and His faithfulness. Not only did the Lord seek me, find me and deliver me out of the deep, dark pit, He chose me to be His instrument of peace and His hands of mercy.

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By Joshua R. Gale

It was this theologically and liturgically rich life at seminary that impacted my ministry in Philadelphia. While it would be foolish to attempt a replication of the CTS campus, there is a lot that can be adapted. Much of my work in Philadelphia centers around care for, and evangelism of, the homeless population. I took this three-fold benefit of seminary life and applied it to the lives of those on the streets.

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The Story Continues

By Joshua R. Gale

There is no standard story for those in the seminary. My entrance into the LCMS was the result of being adopted into a Lutheran family. Some seminarians were born and raised Lutheran. There are at any time several students who converted in adulthood. But whatever our background, we all shared in the richness of Concordia Theological Seminary as we trained to be pastors. Our pasts may have been different, but our destination was singular: ordination into the Office of the Holy Ministry. For those who are considering seminary, or those who are either enrolled or graduated, I want to share a few observations I have of my formative days on the seminary campus and how they relate to my ministry now with Philadelphia Lutheran Ministries.



First, my time at CTS was theological. This is a no-brainer, of course. But the pastor's formation is not dependent upon making him a whimsical people-person, a skilled administrator or even an insightful leader. The pastor is first and foremost a theologian, and the seminary exists to form his theological abilities.

It is this prayerful, deliberate and in-depth study of Scripture and the Confessions, and his adherence to them, that make a pastor capable. In my work with the homeless and very poor of Philadelphia, what we believe, teach and confess is the focus of our outreach, particularly as it is connected to our altars and pulpits. Lutherans can speak like no one else can, and it is imperative that we speak as Lutherans to this dying world.

We are privileged to declare the love and grace of God to unworthy sinners, presenting the sure and certain hope of forgiveness, life and salvation as we are found in Christ. All of our doctrine is what is said about Christ to us; therefore, all theology is practical. When we tell people what Christ has done for them and how He still provides for them, forgives them and renews them, we are speaking theologically. It is this message that continuously brings us and others back to the liturgy and the Sacrament to hear God's Word, receive His absolution, to partake of Christ's body and blood, then turns outward in fruits of love to our neighbor.

Everything else is peripheral; everything else is secondary. This is because mercy is not the Gospel. The nice things we do for others are not the Gospel. The programs and activities of the church are to be formed by our theology and are not simply an end in and of themselves, but they lead back to the liturgy and the gifts of God presented there, the place where the Gospel of Christ's perfect work on our behalf is heard and received, the place where we are truly renewed and God's kingdom is given to us for free.

Second, my seminary days were residential. I left a great job that I loved and thrived in (as did my wife), bid farewell to our friends, moved away from family and took on the financial responsibility of residential studies—not because I was simply able to or because it was the easiest option, but because it was the most fruitful path.

It was fruitful because the richness of the classroom was coupled with an even richer life together that cannot be replicated in a way other than residential seminary studies. I often didn't have to email questions to a professor when I could speak across the lunch table with him. I was very rarely in the professors' offices because we had coffee together after chapel, spent a few hours together every Friday night and attended church with some of them on Sunday morning.

Furthermore, the students, the ones who made the same sacrifices I did to prepare for the ministry, all shared their lives together. We could compare notes and debate with one another around the dinner table. We could also personally share together the difficulties of life. When my newborn son was near death during my vicarage, it was the students, faculty and staff who stepped in like our family to encourage us in that trying time.

After graduation, we were then part of a brotherhood that spanned the world. I have friends in the Czech Republic, Siberia and Kenya, to name a few, not to mention the many who are spread out over the United States.

All the students endure trying financial times as well. It is then that congregations from coast to coast adopt students to help provide for them in part so they can focus on their studies. Congregations and individuals also donate to the Food & Clothing Co-op on campus where students receive food, clothing and household items at no cost. I think this is a wonderful picture of *koinonia* (life together).

Third, and related to the first two, my time at the seminary was liturgical. The chapel building itself stands above the other buildings as the beating heart of the campus. This building is the center of seminary life and the thing I miss most about the three years I

spent at CTS. There's nothing else in the world like Kramer Chapel. Attending the services there provides a rhythm to the week centered on God's Word and the reception of the Sacrament.

It was this theologically and liturgically rich life at seminary that impacted my ministry in Philadelphia. While it would be foolish to attempt a replication of the CTS campus, there is a lot that can be adapted. Much of my work in Philadelphia centers around care for, and evangelism of, the homeless population. I took this three-fold benefit of seminary life and applied it to the lives of those on the streets.

We now have our first houses to be used as transitional homes for people affected by issues of poverty, where men live together around the beating heart of the chapel. These houses, and all of my work in the city, are anchored by the church that has been planted on the property. Somewhat like seminary, the experience for the residents is theological, residential and liturgical.

In-depth catechesis is a requirement for admittance into the houses, placing our theology as the foundational component for a person's recovery. We also celebrate the Sacrament daily with private confession and absolution, and in so doing, place Word and Sacrament as the nucleus of Lutheran inner-city work, extending mercy from our altars and pulpits.

To conclude, my theological, residential, liturgical seminary life was rich beyond my expectations. Not only was seminary worth the sacrifices, those sacrifices were like dust in the balance compared to what I received in preparation for ordination, and the richness of seminary life has extended far beyond the campus. 🏡

The Rev. Joshua R. Gale (CTS 2011) serves as Mission Developer for Philadelphia Lutheran Ministries in Philadelphia, Penn. You can learn more about his work at www.phillyministries.org.

Joshua and Amanda Gale with his parents on Call Night 2011



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