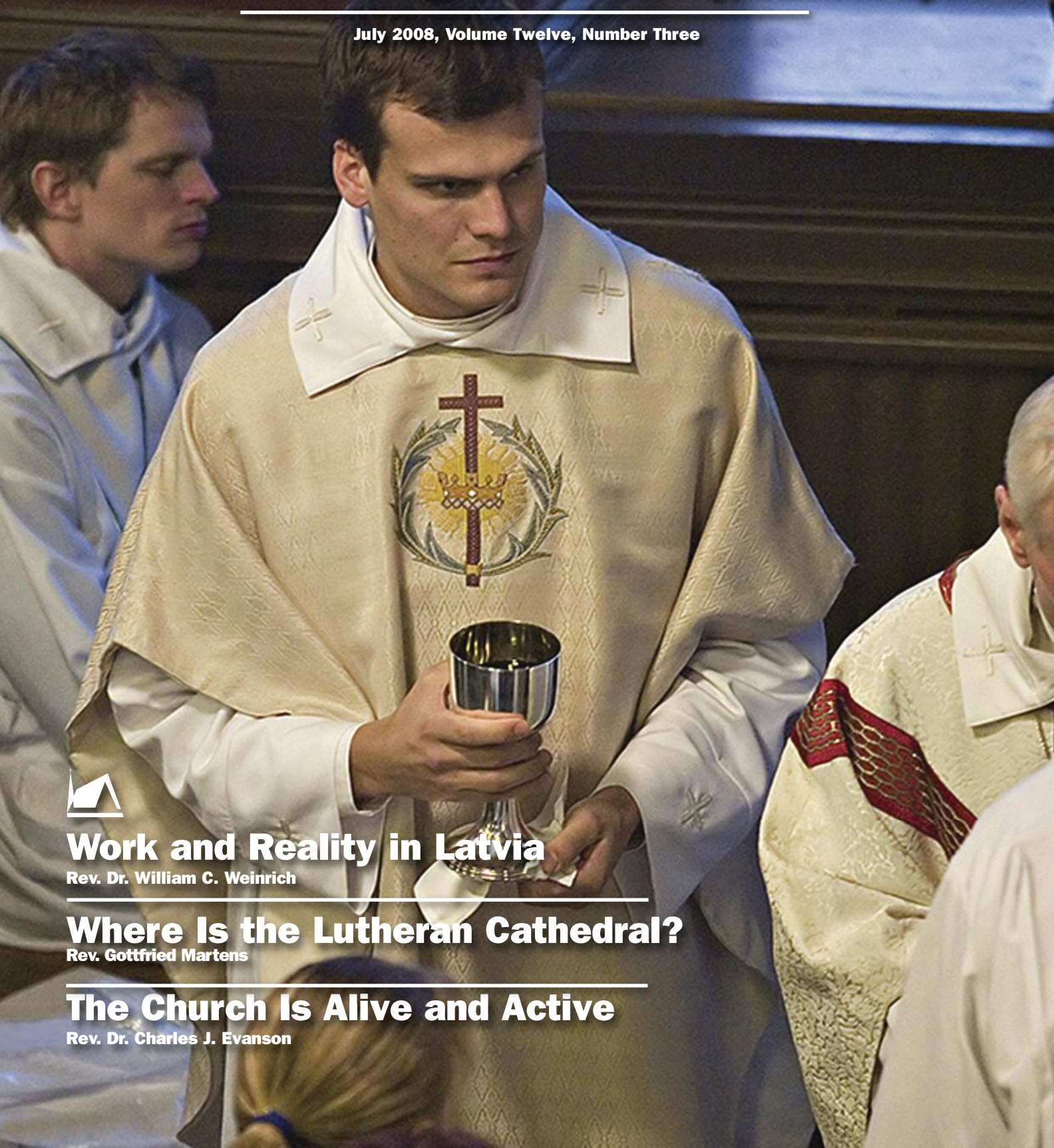


For the Life of the World

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

July 2008, Volume Twelve, Number Three



Work and Reality in Latvia

Rev. Dr. William C. Weinrich

Where Is the Lutheran Cathedral?

Rev. Gottfried Martens

The Church Is Alive and Active

Rev. Dr. Charles J. Evanson

CONTENTS

Volume Twelve, Number Three



FEATURES

4 Work and Reality in Latvia

By Rev. Dr. Wiliam C. Weinrich

The Christians of Latvia are deeply pious and committed but have serious challenges: liturgical change; pressure from the European churches to conform to new theological and social trends, institutional development, theological education needs.

8 Mining the Riches of Lutheran Theology in Germany

By Mr. Jason Lane

Study in the German system, combined with the superb theological education we have received from Fort Wayne, where pastoral care is of primary importance, affords a new generation of theologians the great opportunity to carry on the good confession of Jesus Christ into all the world.

12 A Modern Day Circuit Rider

By Rev. Dr. Chris Barnekov

Historically Sweden was a strongly Lutheran country, but today most churches are empty. Although the Church of Sweden claims to be the largest Lutheran Church in the world, only one member in seventy-five attends worship in an average week, and that figure includes Christmas and Easter.

38 "Where is the Lutheran Cathedral?"

By Rev. Gottfried Martens

In Berlin, the "world's capital of modern atheism," as Peter L. Berger has called it, only 30 percent of the population still belong to a Christian church at all, and about 4 percent worship regularly.

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Pastor Jeff Smith looked at his brothers in the ministry. He'd been thinking for weeks about what to say to his circuit. "We have an opportunity for remarkable ministry before us. Because of the growing violence and recent tragedies in Burma, we're seeing record numbers of people taking refuge in our area. These people are often Buddhist, sometimes Muslim or Animist, and very, very rarely Christian. We need to do something to reach out to these lost souls."



"That's great, Jeff, and I appreciate your concern. But I've tried reaching that community, and the simple fact is that I'm an outsider. I get so far, but I can't get any further. It's just been one exercise in frustration after another to keep trying."

Pastor Smith thought for a moment and then remarked, "What about Zeya? Surely he hasn't been a frustration to you."

"Of course not. He's been a joy since he first heard the Gospel, and he's such a leader in the Burmese community that I hoped he could get me in the door with them, but . . ."

"Why get you in the door? Why not have him serve them himself?"

"You know the answer to that as well as I do, Jeff. He's just not trained for ministry."

"He can be."

SMP:

Stories like these are common in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod today. We live in a world where the movement of people and the natural growth of communities is every day opening up new cultures and communities with opportunities to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But how will they believe if there's no one there to share with them?

Today our Synod is challenged with countless opportunities to proclaim the Gospel to the nations. These opportunities include the numerous ethnic groups present in almost every community, as well as the many people who are living their lives apart from a knowledge of the truth of the Gospel. To meet this challenge, and also to provide for churches that find themselves unable for whatever reason to call a pastor, the 2007 synodical convention authorized the Specific Ministry Pastor program (SMP).

In its most basic form, the SMP

program starts with a congregation seeking to call a pastor. Rather than following the traditional process of calling a pastor from another congregation or from our seminaries, the congregation looks within for men with the skills and willingness to be trained to lead them as their pastor.

Upon admission to the SMP program, the candidate begins serving his vicarage and can expect a very intense training in the basics of Lutheran theology and congregational leadership for the mission field. After two years of online study, he



Meeting the Challenge to Proclaim the Gospel

By Rev. William S. C. Johnson


can be ordained and serves as a pastor under the continuing guidance of his supervisor. Upon completion of the entire four year program, he is certified as a Specific Ministry Pastor and is eligible to serve as an ordained minister in that specific situation or in a very similar one, though still under supervision.

The SMP curriculum itself is focused on mission and ministry in the specific contexts in which the students live. Dr. Arthur Just, Professor of Exegetical Theology, sees SMP as a reflection of ongoing growth and study at CTS. “The SMP curriculum captures the genius of this simple but profound way of teaching future pastors about first things—that Christ does it all through us—the preaching, the teaching, the baptizing, and the celebrating of the Lord’s Supper.”

SMP doesn’t just open up new ways to enter pastoral ministry. The seminary is also forging new paths in *how* the

education process works. Because SMP students are unable to come to the seminary for an extended time, the majority of the courses will be taught using innovative methods of teaching online. Rather than simply seeking to duplicate the traditional classroom online, course creators are looking for creative ways to teach the SMP student the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need for ministry and mission in their specific context. Students will also have opportunity to interact with faculty and fellow students and take part in campus activities through yearly week-long seminars held on campus.

The new SMP curriculum at Concordia Theological Seminary will intentionally seek to immerse the students in the world of Scripture—the text itself—at all points. The scriptural narrative will form the underlying core for the program, but it will be an

integrated curriculum, each course being designed by a cross-departmental team of faculty members. With a curriculum that is christological, pastoral, and missional, the seminary hopes to attain that goal that the participants in the program will emerge with a sensitivity to the cultural context in which they conduct their mission and ministry. The curriculum is also designed to fit in well with the on-campus curriculum course requirements to facilitate transfer to the Master of Divinity program if or when a student wishes to continue on to regular ordination in the LCMS. “We are trying to be as flexible in the design of our SMP program as possible so as to meet the needs of our church and the students,” stated Dr. Douglas Rutt. 

Rev. William S. C. Johnson serves as Concordia Theological Seminary’s Theological Education Technology Specialist.



Pre-ordination Courses

- Confessing Christ in Today’s World
- Pastoral and Missional Theology in Luke and Acts
- The Books of Moses—The Beginning and the New Beginning
- The Lutheran Confessions: Introduction and Overview*
- Baptism: Life in Christ
- Heaven on Earth: The Worship of Lutherans Today
- Preaching the Faith
- Teaching the Faith

*Students will read the entire *Book of Concord* during the first two years.

Post-ordination courses

- The Holy Trinity: The Mission of God in Today’s World
- The Person of Jesus in John’s Gospel
- The Epistles of Paul—Planting the Gentile Mission
- The Prophets—Christ and His Mission Foretold
- Ministry and Mission in Today’s Pluralistic Context
- The Lutheran Confessions in Today’s World
- The Lord’s Supper: Life in Christ Nourished and Sustained
- The Church in Missiological Perspective