



Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne For the Life of the World

March 2015, Volume Nineteen, Number One



The Importance of Continuing Education for Pastors

By Ernie V. Lassman

Advanced Degrees: More Options for Continuing Education

By Peter J. Scaer, Naomichi Masaki, Gifford A. Grobien, K. Detlev Schulz

CTSFW Library: Resource for the Global Church

By Robert V. Roethemeyer

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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).

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Continuing education for pastors and laypeople is available through a variety of advanced degrees. Those offered at Concordia Theological Seminary (CTSFW), Fort Wayne, include the Master of Arts—Religion, Master of Sacred Theology, Doctor of Ministry and Doctor of Philosophy—Missiology. The directors of each of the programs have provided a snapshot of their respective programs.

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By Robert V. Roethemeyer

The chapel and the library are two icons of the campus. Representing the life of the Spirit and the life of the mind, these two are central to the formation of servants of Jesus Christ. Not surprisingly then, worship in Kramer Chapel and the resources of the library are two elements of our life together most often missed by our alumni. Just as you can now live stream daily chapel services, there are also many library resources that are available to the church-at-large.

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The Importance of Continuing for Pastors

By Ernie V. Lassman

The apostle Peter writes in 2 Peter 3:18, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.” Peter encourages us to be constantly growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. While this is true of all Christians, it is most especially true of pastors who nourish, guide and protect the flock of Jesus Christ.



President Lawrence Rast teaching a continuing education course at Messiah Lutheran Church, Seattle, Washington.

When I graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary (CTSFW), Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1978, I was convinced that I was finished with formal education. After four years of study to receive a Bachelor of Arts degree and another four years to receive a Master of Divinity degree, I had no desire to continue with such formal studies. Prior to graduating from the Seminary the dean of Graduate Studies encouraged me to pursue a Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.) degree. I declined, not only because I was weary of such intense study, but I was eager to get in the field and shepherd God’s people. I wanted to be a pastor.

My call was to Our Savior’s Lutheran Church in Parksville, British Columbia, Canada. For the first five years, I was content to discipline myself to study. Having written a seminary paper on 2 Peter 3:18 and its implications for Christian education, I understood that the office I held demanded my very best. I studied the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, Church History and the Fathers, as well as the practical arts of preaching, teaching and counseling. Yet, something was missing. I concluded that I needed the structure of a classroom setting and someone else teaching me.

After this realization two important events followed. I enrolled in the S.T.M. Program at CTSFW (as the dean of Graduate Studies had encouraged me!). About the same time, I was elected to the

Board of Directors of the Alberta-British Columbia District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) as the chair of Education and began to encourage others to seek continuing education.

In 1988, I was installed as the pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church in Seattle and received my S.T.M. degree in 1991. I had learned the hard way why the dean of Graduate Studies had encouraged me to stay for graduate study. It was a daunting task to work as a full-time pastor and complete such a degree, especially the thesis. But I learned a lot about myself, being a pastor and the value of being taught by someone else. At about the same time, the pastor who had been hosting a Fort Wayne Continuing Education site in the Seattle area no longer wished to be

Education



a site coordinator, and I gladly accepted it. Between 1991 and 2014 Messiah in Seattle has hosted a continuing education class every year except for 1992. In addition to attending other continuing education sites, I have participated in all 23 classes at Messiah for a total of 72 Continuing Education Units (CEU). And all of them have contributed in some way to make me a better pastor to God's people, a better churchman and a better witness to those who do not know God's love in Jesus Christ.

I have given all of this background information so that I might invite and encourage all Christians, and especially pastors, to participate in continuing education. I know that there are impediments to pursuing this goal. Pastors are busy and it is difficult to find time, money must be found for the class and perhaps for transportation and lodging, and some congregations might have to be taught the value of continuing education for their pastor. But once the effort is made and the habit established,

Participants in the CTSFW continuing education course taught by Dr. Naomichi Masaki at Redeemer Lutheran Church in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

it is hard to deny the positive effects.

The apostle Peter writes in 2 Peter 3:18, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.” Peter encourages us to be growing constantly in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. While this is true of all Christians, it is most especially true of pastors who nourish, guide and protect the flock of Jesus Christ. A pastor’s continuing education is not only for his own spiritual well-being but also for

Continuing education is a time for the pastor to be nourished and strengthened for his own life and for his service to God’s people as Peter says in 1 Peter 5:1-4.

the spiritual well-being of the people he serves. By emphasizing the word grace, Peter is guarding us against all forms of legalism, antinomianism and false ways to God that he warns about in both of his letters. We are saved not by what we do, but only by what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. This must also be the focus of every Christian and especially every pastor who shepherds the people for whom Christ has died. The message of God’s grace in Jesus Christ has been given in clear propositional statements that illuminate the truth of God’s grace in Jesus Christ and that result in Him being given all the glory both now and in eternity. This growth in grace and knowledge is made possible only by God’s Word, which Peter refers to six times in his two short letters.

When continuing education is seen in the light of 2 Peter 3:18, it is clear that the primary concern or goal is the salvation of God’s people. Only if the pastor is certain of his own salvation, because of the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, can he lead people to that same certainty. Continuing education is a time for the pastor to be nourished and strengthened for his own life and for his service to

God’s people as Peter says in 1 Peter 5:1-4, “So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

There are other advantages closely connected with the blessings that come from attending continuing education. The classes at Messiah run Monday to Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. In this time, class members not only learn the truth and application of God’s Word but they establish relationships with the instructor and the other class members. Continuing education also gives an opportunity to learn from the instructor about the life and activities of the seminaries and about the church-at-large. It is a time to become acquainted with pastors and laymen from other parts of the country and to encourage one another in the faith, as our Confessions say, “...through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren...”

(Smalcald Articles, IV). This happens in the classroom setting as well as in the evening when one or two social events are organized. The next class in Seattle is June 29–July 3, 2015. The Rev. Dr. Naomichi Masaki, professor of Systematic Theology at CTSFW, will be teaching “Law and Gospel according to Luther’s Great Galatians Lectures.” Now, how can you pass that up? See you in Seattle? If not.....then maybe at another continuing education site; the listing for the 2015 sites can be found on page 7. 📌

The Rev. Ernie V. Lassman serves as senior pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church (www.messiahseattle.org), Seattle, Washington.



Lectionary Podcasts with the CTSFW Faculty

Based upon the Gospel reading for the upcoming Sunday from the three-year lectionary.

Posted every Tuesday on the Seminary’s Facebook page, www.facebook.com/ctsfw (No login is required)

Excellent resource for pastors, teachers and laypeople