

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY



Volume 85:2

April 2021

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Birth Announcement of Concordia Theological Seminary: The Lutheran Seminary at Fort Wayne

Wilhelm Sihler (1801–1885)¹

Since it has pleased the almighty and all-merciful God to revive our precious Lutheran church on both sides of the ocean, even by means of the false union of our times, faithful members of the church in the German fatherland lovingly worked for their brothers in faith here in America. For this purpose, they have made it possible during the past four years for nineteen believing and churchly minded men to come over here in order to serve the Lutheran church as preachers and schoolteachers after having been prepared, examined, and specially instructed at home. Recently, the love of these devoted men for their American brothers has gone even further. Because of the current need, and in anticipation of increased future need, they have decided to establish a seminary in Fort Wayne, so that faithful, qualified young men can receive the necessary training to take over the holy preaching office in the Lutheran church. To this end, they have not only made money available already for the building project, they have also sent a candidate of theology as well as eleven young men, who for a shorter or longer period of time have just received instruction by seasoned Lutheran pastors.

These have already arrived here last month, and another candidate of theology, who will also work as a teacher, will soon join them. After the most basic arrangements have been made (work on the proposed seminary building will not commence until next spring), classes are expected to start already this month, with the help of the almighty God.

At this time, we are not releasing details concerning these classes. For now, we only want to call the attention of the reader and the faithful, Lutheran congregations to two particulars: one is a short explanation of the purpose of the seminary, and the other is a request to all faithful members of the Lutheran church who do not yet have such an institution to support, that they will help take care of this little seedling, that they will help tend it with their assistance and prayers. Referring to the purpose of the seminary, we freely admit that it is our heartfelt desire and will to prepare servants for our church, under the mercy and with the blessing of the triune God:

¹ Wilhelm Sihler, “Das lutherische Seminar zu Fort Wayne,” *Der Lutheraner* 3, no. 5 (October 1846): 29–30. This text was translated for Project Wittenberg (<http://www.projectwittenberg.org/etext/cts/ctsborn.txt>) by Erika Bullmann Flores in 1994 and edited by Nathaniel Jensen in 2020. You may freely distribute, copy, or print this text. Please direct any comments or suggestions to Rev. Robert E. Smith, Kroemer Library, Concordia Theological Seminary, 6600 N. Clinton St., Fort Wayne, IN 46825. Email robert.smith@ctsfw.edu or call (260) 452-3149.

1) who cling to the pattern of the saving doctrine and remain in what has been entrusted to them, just as the orthodox church—called Lutheran—from the beginning believes God’s word, confesses and teaches it;

2) who do not wish to become associated with this anti-scriptural “church-merging” [*Kirchenmengerei*] and false “unionism” of our times. Regretfully, many of the so-called Lutheran synods are embroiled in this matter in either word or deed.² Rather, we desire those who fight for the faith which has once been given to the saints, who wish no other union, nor join it, than that of the same faith, confession, and doctrine in all articles as given to us through God’s word of truth, leading to salvation;

3) who have a healthy and thorough knowledge of the truth and, if God will, have personally experienced this truth;

4) who diligently teach this truth to others, who rightly divide and connect the word of God, law and gospel, and thus thwart the rabble rousers and false religious enthusiasts;

5) who humbly and sincerely love their church, in whose clear conscience is embedded the mystery of faith;

6) who are willing to bear all sorts of internal and external troubles and tribulations for the sake of the most dear confession and the one, pure doctrine;

7) who take care of themselves and the flock which might be entrusted to their care by the Arch-shepherd, who will faithfully tend to them with the pure word and sacrament, both individually and as a group, and by their lives and conduct will bear the fruit of the spirit and be an example to them;

8) who finally strive to hold to unity in the spirit through the bond of peace with one another, always conscious that not only have they been created by the same Father, were redeemed by the same Son, and sanctified by the same Spirit, but that they serve God in this most holy matter—the building of *his* holy church as *his* co-workers.

It is our intent, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to produce such servants for the church, sooner or later, depending on their age and talents. To reach this goal, to make this possible—and this is another reason for my brotherly address—prayer and help is needed not only from those precious brothers in the faith in Germany, but also here in America, for whom this institution is being established.

² [Note from the original text:] It is a well-known fact that the so-called Lutheran General Synod, for instance, teaches the Reformed view of the holy sacraments, and in church practice is in many ways Methodist; also, members of the Lutheran synods of Ohio and Michigan serve mixed congregations as such, which means that, for instance the administration of Holy Communion is Lutheran for the Lutherans and Reformed for the Reformed.

How many of those here are building houses and barns and are planting orchards, with their children in mind? They carefully tend to these buildings and plantations so that their children and children's children can enjoy the earthly benefits of them. Should they not also help groom this spiritual plantation and tend to it with their faithful prayers and assistance, from which they and their children will, with God's blessing, reap the heavenly reward? Would they willingly watch their friends work their fields and build their houses, while they themselves are fit and strong enough at least to help?

Therefore, I am hopeful that I am not asking the faithful sons of our beloved church in vain—though because of her current decay and distortion there may not be many—to help the German brothers and brothers in faith with prayerful hearts and open hands in the cultivation of this seminary, this spiritual work of love. Are not our feet willing to carry the entire body in whatever direction the head guides it; in return the eyes and hands, yea the entire body bends down to the feet and cares for them, whenever ill has befallen them? Should then we, who are one spiritual body in Christ, be shamed by our physical body, and not tend to one another and together do works of love?

Should we, to whom the precious treasure of the pure saving doctrine and the unadulterated sacraments has been given by the Lord to perpetuate and propagate, remain cold, mistrustful, and idle? Should our fervor for the preservation of the pure, saving truth be surpassed by the fervor of the papists and enthusiasts for the preservation of their soul-destroying false doctrine? Therefore, beloved brothers and brothers in faith on this side of the sea, you who still love your church as the pillar and foundation of the truth, who are concerned with the preservation thereof among the thousands of emigrating brothers in faith who come every year, give a hand here! Together let us—as Nehemiah and his followers of old—with the one hand fight the papists and enthusiasts, false brothers and all anti-scriptural and uneclesiastical union, and with the other hand, however, let us build!

Now the faithful Lord and God, who lets the sincere succeed, will make this lovely word of promise come true for us also in this sense. May he do this out of grace! Amen.³

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Luth. Preacher at Fort Wayne, IN
Currently Director of the Seminary
Fort Wayne, October 24, 1846

³ [Note from the original text:] Every donation for the seminary will be published quarterly in *Der Lutheraner*, with the permission of the publisher, which certifies receipt thereof.