



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

September 2015, Volume Nineteen, Number Three



It's the Message That Matters

By Adam L. Sorenson

Predicar la palabra

By Isaac S. Schuller

A Servant Life

By Michael A. Johnson Sr.

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

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By Isaac S. Schuller

I am blessed with the opportunity to proclaim the mighty works of God Sunday after Sunday in English and in Spanish, to *predicar la palabra* (preach the Word). Ministering to people in Spanish has been a great privilege. One of the greatest gifts I have received from working with people whose mother tongue is Spanish is to hear them ask the question “¿Qué significa esto?”

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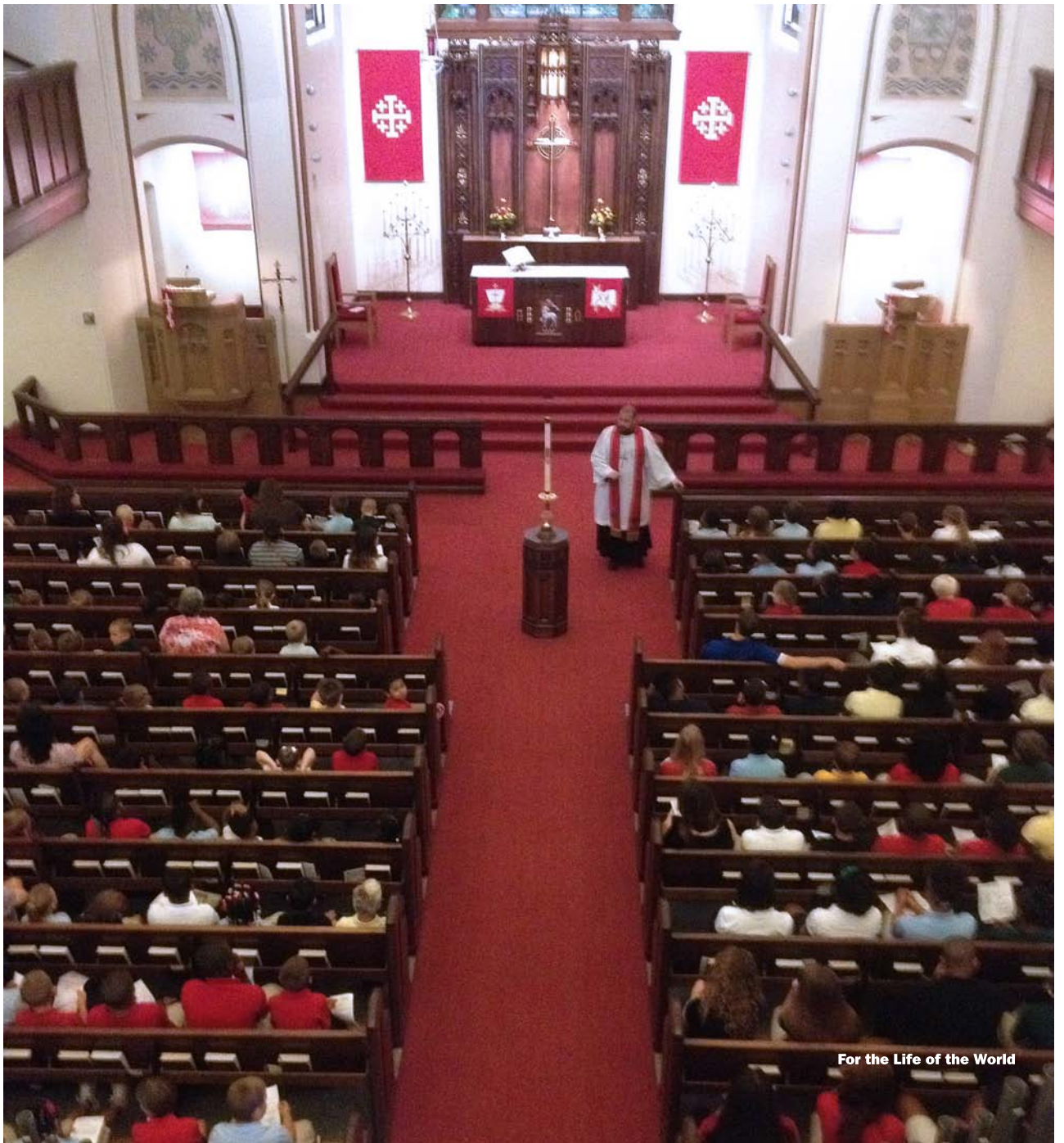
In respect to serving in various ministries, locations may be different, people may be different in age, race, creed, ethnicity and culture, yet all have the same eternal need, that of a Savior, namely, Jesus Christ. In receiving Him, pastors serve as Christ's agents, standing in His stead and by His command to preach, teach and administer His Sacraments to the faithful.

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It's the Message That Matters

By Adam L. Sorenson



“It’s not the end of the world,

but you can see it from here.” Those were the first words I heard from my congregation president after the Seminary’s Call Service in April 2009. My wife and I had already struggled to find Gordon, Nebraska, on the map, so needless to say, his words didn’t feel all that reassuring. But what started as a shock turned into a great blessing. The people of Grace Lutheran Church were very welcoming, gracious and, indeed, forgiving of their new pastor. But what does rural life and ministry out on the prairie have to do with urban ministry? That’s what I, too, was wondering after I was called to serve Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. The two locations could not be more different from one another, and the ensuing culture shock that set in upon arriving in Milwaukee was real and took time to work through.

Milwaukee is the 31st most populous city in America and grew rapidly during the mid-to-late 19th century as a result of German and other European immigration. A tour of Milwaukee would show many beautiful churches built during these growth years, however things have changed with time. Milwaukee is no longer dominated by German Lutherans but has become more diverse as the demographics of the city continue to shift over time. As a result many congregations in the city are struggling or have even closed as they wrestle with the realities of changing neighborhoods and populations within the city.

Mount Olive is situated on a half city block with both the wealthiest and the poorest neighborhoods in the city of Milwaukee within a short walk. This makes for a congregation that is blessed with a rich diversity of economics, race, age and culture that all come together and are united in one faith in Christ Jesus our Lord. From the time of her founding as a mission to the English speaking people of Milwaukee in 1894, Mount Olive has sought to reach out faithfully to the people of her community with the mercy and forgiveness of Christ.

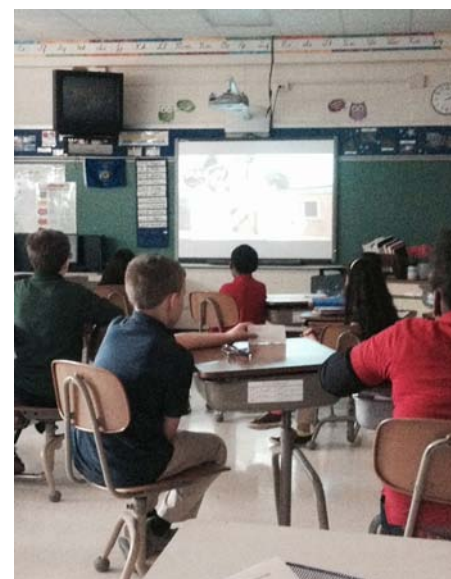
A large part of that outreach is accomplished through the work of our pre-kindergarten–8th Grade day school.

From the founding of the congregation until today, Mount Olive has seen the great importance of forming a new generation in the faith. The founding members dreamed of having a day school for this very important purpose, a dream that would finally come to fruition in 1951 and continue to be a blessing to this very day. Times for Mount Olive have not always been great. Economic hardships and declining membership have threatened not only to consolidate the school’s classrooms, but also threatened its very existence. Our enrollment has now reached a 10 year high of 191 students thanks to the exceptional leadership of our principal, Dr. Christopher Cody. Approximately half of our students are not members of Mount Olive, and yet, their families have chosen our day school as a place to receive an excellent Lutheran education. While it’s safe to say that many may come to our school not knowing what Lutherans believe, none will remain that way by the time they graduate.

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In a time when the Church faces increasing opposition from the world, the temptation is to soften and conform the message of the Gospel in order, somehow, to be more appealing. That is the exact opposite of what we at Mount Olive strive to do. In fact, I believe it is more important than ever to be faithfully and distinctively Lutheran in our faith, our teaching, our practice and in our worship






In some ways, I think of our work at Mount Olive as being rather unexceptional. What I mean is, we are not trying to be diverse. We are not trying to implement a new model or program for urban ministry. Rather, we simply strive to be faithful. To preach and teach the Word. To care for people in their needs with the love of Christ.

more important than ever to be faithfully and distinctively Lutheran in our faith, our teaching, our practice and in our worship. To that end the church and school work hand in hand together to model and teach the faith. The pastors strive not only to be involved in the school through catechesis and teaching, but also through fostering relationships with students and their families. Thanks be to God that the Holy Spirit continues to work through the Word to call, gather, enlighten and sanctify the whole Christian Church on earth and keep it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

This is why, in some ways, I think of our work at Mount Olive as being rather unexceptional. What I mean is, we are not trying to be diverse. We are not trying to implement a new model or program for urban ministry. Rather, we simply strive to be faithful. To preach and teach the Word. To care for people in their needs with the love of Christ. Thus it is Christ and His means of grace that are exceptional, not us. He takes us, who were not a people, and unites us together as God's forgiven and redeemed children. This is true whether you find yourself in an urban center or in the rural countryside.

While I can honestly say that I never had a desire to live or serve in the city, that is precisely where the Lord has called me to serve. I continue to be grateful for the faithful pastoral formation that I received at the Seminary

that has prepared me to serve Christ in any context. People everywhere are dying in the darkness of sin and they need the light of Christ. They need the forgiveness, life and salvation that come through Christ alone. While the places we serve, the people and the sins they struggle with may be different, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8) and He died to save them all.

"But the Church is not only the fellowship of outward objects and rites, as other governments, but at its core, it is a fellowship of faith and of the Holy Spirit in hearts. Yet this fellowship has outward marks so that it can be recognized. These marks are the pure doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments in accordance with the Gospel of Christ. This church alone is called Christ's body, which Christ renews, sanctifies, and governs by His Spirit."¹ (Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article VII and VIII) 

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¹ *Concordia The Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2006) 144.

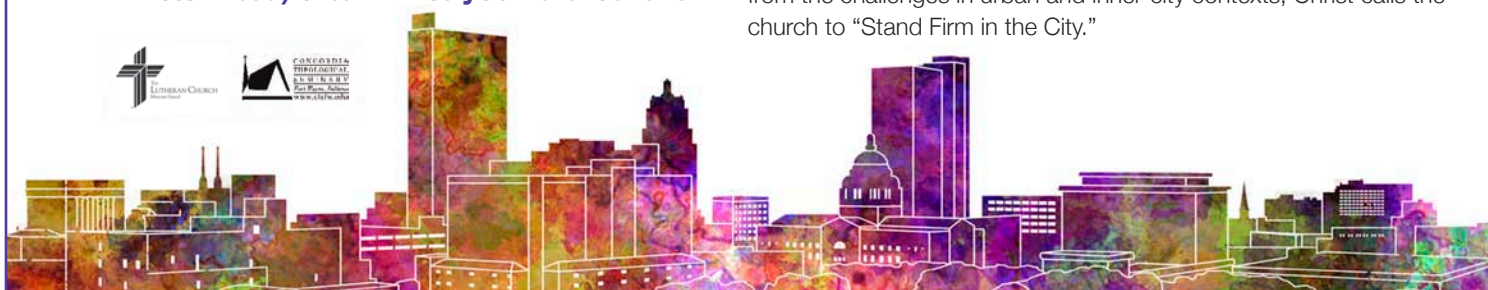
URBAN & INNER-CITY MISSION CONFERENCE

Stand Firm in the City

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

OCTOBER 12–14, 2015

www.ctsfw.edu/UrbanMinistryConference2015



The unrest that occurred recently in Ferguson, Baltimore and Oakland could happen in any of our major cities. There is a need for stronger communities and families, quality education and health care, jobs, trust and reconciliation. What is needed the most, however, is the Gospel, which transforms individual lives. Rather than retreating from the challenges in urban and inner-city contexts, Christ calls the church to "Stand Firm in the City."

"And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49)