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## For the Life of the World

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

## IN THIS ISSUE

### 4 Reflections on the Presidency

Two weeks before he retired from the presidency of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr. shared some reflections on the past thirteen years at the helm of CTSFW. “You get to meet people and develop a range of relationships that I couldn’t have imagined before I entered this role,” said Rast. “I’ll probably miss that significantly. Not the traveling—I’ve done enough of that in my life. But working with people, that’s been the best part.”

### 8 God’s Blessings in the Past Years

The list of improvements and blessings to the Seminary over the past thirteen years is long, touching every aspect of formation at CTSFW. The overview on these pages, mirroring a new CTSFW video, “Faithfully Forming Servants,” hits a few of the highlights.

### 11 Bruss to Serve as Seventeenth President of CTSFW

Dr. Jon S. Bruss, who joined the CTSFW faculty in 2022 as associate professor of systematic theology, was called on May 18, 2024, to serve as CTSFW’s new president. He accepted, asking for prayers for himself, his family, “and above all, our seminary, which has been and remains a singularly effective instrument for forming faithful servants of Christ and His Church.”

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# CTSFW **Students Explore Missions** in the Dominican Republic

Glen A. Werling



**Participants in the short-term mission education trip:** *From left (front): Erin Alter (director, LCMS Short-Term Mission Teams), Erin Mackenzie (LCMS missionary, Dominican Republic), Marius-Sergiu Trifa, Paul Mroczewski, Christian Mundorf, Conner Walts, Peter Williams; (second row) Patrick Randolph, Richard Sovitzky, Josiah Junkin, Aaron Wade, Cory Willweber, Erik Osmundson; (back) Dr. Benjamin Mayes, Rev. Yban Navarro (pastor, Dominican Republic), and Rev. Sergio Fritzler (director, Seminario Concordia El Reformador).*

Eleven CTSFW students immersed themselves in Lutheran mission work in the Dominican Republic during the break between winter and spring quarter.

“The experience taught us a lot about mission,” said Dr. Benjamin Mayes, associate professor of historical theology, who accompanied the students on the trip. The purpose of the trip, Mayes said, was for students to experience what the church is like in Latin America, how people in the Dominican Republic live, and how the mission of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) is carried out in Latin America.

“We wanted to open their eyes to the possibility that maybe they themselves could become either career missionaries or be active in reaching out to Latinos here in the United States,” said Mayes.

One of the best features of the trip, which was coordinated by the LCMS Office of International Mission, was that the students were able to share in the experiences of the trip together. “We were able to pray together. We were

able to have discussions with each other and get to know each other better,” said first-year student Sergiu Trifa. “It made us have stronger connections with each other and united us as a group.”

During their visit, students were able to visit four Lutheran missions. “We worshiped at three of them,” said second-year seminarian Cory Willweber. He said he enjoyed being able to use the Spanish-language hymnal to worship with locals who attended church at the missions. “It was a very similar order of service to what we are used to,” Willweber said. “We also sang many of the same hymns we sing here in the United States, except we sang them in Spanish.”

The CTSFW students stayed at Seminario Concordia El Reformador, the mission seminary on a hill in Palmar Arriba overlooking Santiago de los Caballeros, the second-largest



The trip benefited the students in many ways. They were pushed outside of their comfort zones and their safe spaces to get out where the people are. Regardless of whether they travel abroad for missions or undertake mission work wherever they are sent, the lessons learned on this trip will serve them well.



city in the Dominican Republic. In addition to participating in classes at the seminary, the seminarians were able to play volleyball with residents of the neighborhood, tour a local cigar factory, and sample local culture and cuisine.

At one point while eating out as a group, the seminarians were approached by a local woman who told the men her mother was very sick, and she wanted them to pray for her mother. “We all came into this sick woman’s room,” recalled second-year seminarian Conner Walts. “Dr. Mayes blessed the woman and read a psalm for her, all in Spanish, Walts said. “It meant the world to the sick woman and to her caregiver,” Walts said.

Walts added that it was hard to explain just how culturally open the people of the Dominican Republic are. “They are very open to religion and spirituality,” Walts said.

The cultural immersion also included teaching English as a Second Language classes, which the seminarians enjoyed. “Aaron [Wade] and I have very different

accents, so the students would try to imitate the way we were talking, and then they turned it around, and we had to imitate them,” said second-year student Josiah Junkin.

The students also spent time with Theodore Krey (CTSFW 1996), his wife Rebecca, and their five children. Krey serves as the regional director for the Latin America and Caribbean region of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Mayes observed that the trip benefited the students in many ways. “They were pushed outside of their comfort zones and their safe spaces to get out where the people are,” he said. Regardless of whether they travel abroad for missions or undertake mission work wherever they are sent, the lessons learned on this trip will serve them well, he observed. 📖

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**Top left:** Patrick Randolph, Erik Osmundson, Conner Walts, and Sergiu Trifa receive holy communion from Rev. Yban Navarro. **Top center:** CTSFW students, missionaries, and congregation members enjoy volleyball in Palmar Arriba. **Top right:** Richard Sovitzky and CTSFW students enjoy a meal at the home of missionary Rev. Theodore Krey. **Bottom left:** Cornerstone of a Lutheran congregation in Licey. **Bottom center:** Dr. Benjamin Mayes preaches in a chapel service at Seminario Concordia El Reformador, Palmar Arriba, Dominican Republic. **Bottom right:** Missionary Rev. Theodore Krey teaches CTSFW students on the Lutheran doctrine of mission.