



# **THE SPRINGFIELDER**

December 1971  
Volume 35, Number 3

# "Blessed To Be A Blessing"

RUDOLPH A. HAAK (Class 1952)

*President, Central Illinois District,  
The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (1970- )*

**A**LUMNI AND MEMBERS of the church observing the anniversary of a Seminary will surely be asking a question about purpose. In this anniversary year we thank a gracious Lord for 125 years of existence as a Seminary. But this thanksgiving will have meaning only in proportion to the extent to which God's gracious purposes are accomplished. To what avail were the financial struggles of the past which at times threatened the very existence of the Seminary if they were not to fulfill a glorious destiny of God's purpose? To what avail the struggles of the Seminary students in their efforts to successfully complete the courses at the Seminary, while at the same time bearing the responsibility of keeping a family fed and warm and healthy, if these were not to fulfill a great and unique purpose? To what purpose was the dedicated service of an overloaded, underpaid faculty for these 125 years? To thank God for the growth of a Seminary from a few old buildings to the beautiful campus of today doesn't make sense unless we are sensitive to God's purpose for the Seminary. To review its growth in terms of students, the handful of 1846 compared to the 371 of 1971, the faculty of three in 1846 to the thirty-five of 1971, has meaning only in terms of fulfillment of God's purpose.

The anniversary of a Seminary is surely a time for the church to ask why it has supported it for these 125 years. This is a time for the church and the observing community to ask, "What is it that will tear a student from a successful, well-paying life's occupation to begin a vocation that offers little by way of material goods connected with the American concept of success? What is it that will motivate a student to be uprooted from his family and the security of the community in which he is accepted to go to a place that is unknown?"

The successful functioning of a Lutheran Seminary depends upon the understanding of God's Word to Abraham as He said, "I will bless you, and you shall be a blessing." (Gen. 12:1-3). All depends on our possessing God's abundant grace and blessing. But God's blessing upon us includes His gift of understanding—understanding His gracious purposes for us and an ability to respond positively to them. It depends upon a deep commitment to the God who promises, "I will bless you, and you shall be a blessing."

The marvel of the past 125 years is that God has kept His promises even when we have failed Him. His blessing upon us was not contingent upon our perfect performance. In spite of our fears and failures and faltering steps, in spite of a side-tracked sense of purpose, in spite of our sins, His blessings each day were as fresh as the morning dew. All of the blessings of the past 125 years have

been bestowed by God that *we should be a blessing!* The message of the Gospel, the dedicated professors and students, the unique gifts of each of them, the growth in numbers, the strength and time to perform, the gift of the Holy Spirit—all are blessings given to us so that we might be a blessing.

Meaningful living for all of God's people should include making a contribution to the life of another. Because God's people live in the world, the people of the world should be "better off." But the greatest blessing which God would bring to people through us is the Gospel. God's love in Christ, the self-sacrificing love of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, the triumphant life through the living Jesus, eternal life—to carry the message which bestows these gifts is fulfilling a unique purpose. To act out the meaning of the Gospel in attitude, words, and deeds is an important part of fulfilling God's purpose for us. There are many ways in which Christian people might develop expertise in making a contribution to life. But the Seminary's high purpose must ever be to bring the living Christ to the world and to the members of the church through the Gospel, spoken and acted out. We are the only people who can do this. God does not reveal Himself to the world—except through us.

What lies ahead? Only God knows. But whatever lies in the future for Concordia Seminary must be shaped around the purpose of *being a blessing*. Will the curriculum change? If this is needed to fulfill the purpose of being a blessing, indeed it will. Will there be new buildings? Will enrollment increase? Will we add to faculty? Will our people continue to support our Seminary—and increase it? The "right" answers to all these questions can only be received from a gracious God as we remain sensitive to his purpose—to be a blessing. With this awesome, singleness of purpose the destiny of our Seminary remains secure—in spite of strange journeys through paths not trod before to a place chosen by God to fulfill His plan. (Gen. 12:1-3).

Blessed—to be a Blessing! In this lies the reason for our deep gratitude for the good things of the past 125 years. In this lies the exciting hope, the confident direction, and the joyous task of the future.