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# The Anniversary of Concordia Theological Seminary

Walter A. Maier

Chairman of the One-Hundred-and-Fiftieth Anniversary  
Celebration of Concordia Theological Seminary

Concordia Theological Seminary is in this year 1996 privileged to celebrate the one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of its founding. From the time the first classes were taught in the parsonage of St. Paul's Lutheran church in Fort Wayne, in October of 1846, until the present, when the seminary occupies a beautiful campus of two hundred acres near the St. Joseph River, this "school of the prophets" has served as God's instrument in preparing over four thousand men for the ministerium of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It has also, through its graduate and extension programs, assisted in the advanced theological education of many pastors through the years. These are great blessings from, and grounds of profound gratitude to, the Lord of the church. These are many reasons for the seminary and the church to rejoice during the current celebratory period.

Many months were spent in preparation for the commemoration of this milestone in the seminary's history. An Anniversary Committee, comprised of members of the seminary and of distinguished fellow-Lutherans in Fort Wayne, was brought into being in the summer of 1994 and began the work of planning the events of the celebration. Earlier an Anniversary Thank-Offering Committee, with members from the Board of Regents, the President's Advisory Council, and the Office of Seminary Advancement, had developed a blueprint for an ingathering of gifts and pledges with a modest goal of \$1,500,000. All income was earmarked for student aid. The advance phase of this appeal was so successful that this goal was already surpassed by February of 1995. It is noteworthy that the members of the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary themselves over-subscribed the challenging amount that had been set for them ahead of time in gifts and pledges.

The Anniversary Committee in due time settled upon a series of commemorative events which were scheduled at intervals throughout the celebrative period, set as January 1 through October 31 of 1996. These events, listed with dates and descriptions of each in a color brochure entitled "150th Anniversary Celebration Events," included

scholarly lectures on the founding fathers of the seminary, choral concerts, organ recitals, symposia, "Lutheran Nights" at sporting events in the city, a special recognition of Lutheran educators, an anniversary banquet, and a city-wide Reformation Service in the Fort Wayne War-Memorial Coliseum—the culminating event of the anniversary commemoration. A calendar of the year 1996 featuring pictures and brief biographical accounts of leaders in the history of the seminary was prepared as a companion to the brochure. A short popular history of the seminary bearing the title "Shepherds of Christ's Sheep: Concordia Theological Seminary Meets a Need" was printed for distribution to churches and schools in the area and to visitors on the campus.

In a special service in the chapel at the end of January of 1996 two special contributions were dedicated. The first was a hymn which had been commissioned to mark the seminary's anniversary, with a text written by an alumnus of Concordia Theological Seminary, the Reverend Stephen Starke of Middletown, Connecticut, and a tune composed by Dr. Carl Schalk of Concordia University, River Forest, Illinois. The second was a hand-made banner featuring the symbol of the anniversary. Anniversary banners have been fluttering in the breeze from the light-poles on the campus since the beginning of the year.

Commemorative events through May of 1996 have been well received and attended. One unscheduled but happy event was the installation at the end of April of Dr. Dean O. Wenthe as the fifteenth president of Concordia Theological Seminary. Ahead lies the seminary's participation in the annual Germanfest and Black Expo of Fort Wayne and in the Great Lakes Great Commission Initiative, all in June.

The four-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther's death (on February 18, 1546) is being observed in the same year as the one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the seminary. In this connection the seminary is sponsoring a tour of fourteen days July 9-22 to "Lutherland and Alpine Europe." This tour, open to Lutherans and others across the country, is well subscribed—just as have been the tours sponsored by Concordia Theological Seminary to the Holy Land and to Greece and Turkey ("In the Footsteps of St.

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Paul") in alternate years.

Dr. Alvin Barry, the President of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, is scheduled to address a large anniversary banquet, which is to be held in mid-September on the evening of the Sunday on which the opening service of the academic year of 1996-1997 is to take place. Dr. Dale Meyer, the speaker of the Lutheran Hour, has been invited to preach at the Reformation Service which has been scheduled, with "Preach the Word" as its special theme, to be held in the Coliseum of Fort Wayne at the end of October.

On the same day, Reformation Sunday, each of the congregations of the synod is being invited to make mention of the sesquicentennial of Concordia Theological Seminary, to pray God to bless richly its future service to the church, and to participate in a thankoffering to be dedicated to the financial aid of its students. These requests are the results of a resolution which was unanimously adopted by the synodical convention held in St. Louis in July of 1995. The complete text of Resolution 5-01 of the Fifty-Ninth Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is appended to these paragraphs. The faculty and staff of the seminary are exceedingly grateful to the total membership of the church for all of the expressions of support which they have received heretofore and continue to receive as, looking to the Lord for wisdom and strength, they seek to carry on the work of preparing faithful and able ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ for the congregations of the synod and its missions. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

**Resolution 5-01 of the Fifty-Ninth Regular Convention  
of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod**

**"To Give Thanks for Concordia Theological Seminary  
as It Celebrates Its One-Hundred-and-Fiftieth  
Anniversary in 1996"**

*Whereas*, God willing, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, will in 1996 celebrate one hundred fifty years of its existence and service in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; and

*Whereas* during this period the seminary has been the Lord's instrument in training more than four thousand pastors for ministry in the synod and has also furthered the theological education of many pastors through its graduate and extension programs; and

*Whereas* throughout its history the seminary has, under God, maintained without interruption a steadfastness in the teaching of the doctrine set forth in the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions; and

*Whereas* in recent years, as in its early history, the seminary with characteristic missionary zeal has shown a flexibility in the mode of delivery of theological training in order to meet the needs of, and challenges to, the church; and

*Whereas* the seminary has through the years and under the blessing of the Lord enjoyed the presence on its campus of enthusiastic, consecrated students and the service of dedicated, capable presidents, professors, administrators, and staff persons who furthered the seminary's mission of preparing pastors to "Preach the Word" (the seminary's motto); and

*Whereas* the seminary by God's goodness has through the years received the faithful prayers and financial support of the members of the synod's congregations and has educated many students from their families; and

*Whereas* the seminary will celebrate its sesquicentennial during the months of the year 1996 and will at that time seek to complete an ingathering of funds and pledges for student aid in a 150th Anniversary "Preach the Word" Thank Offering (the reception of gifts is already underway); therefore be it

*Resolved* that the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod assembled in its fifty-ninth convention in St. Louis thank the Lord of the church for His grace in: giving Concordia Theological Seminary to the synod for one hundred fifty years; providing more than four thousand graduates from this seminary to serve as pastors in the synod since the time of the seminary's founding in 1846; enabling the seminary to maintain scriptural and confessional orthodoxy in its theological programs, while pioneering in the delivery of alternate

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route theological education to certain groups in the field; providing the seminary with faithful, dedicated, capable leadership, faculties, and service personnel for the achievement of its mission of preparing pastors to "Preach and Word"; and opening the hearts of the people of the church to furnish substantial prayer and financial support of the seminary and its program, and to encourage likely men to study for the ministry; and be it further

*Resolved* that the synod encourage its congregations to take note of the seminary's 150th anniversary celebration during a worship service on Reformation Sunday, 1996, at which thanks is given to God for His grace in establishing Concordia Theological Seminary, maintaining it for one hundred fifty years, and blessing the church through the students it has prepared for pastoral service in the synod; and be it further

*Resolved* that congregational members also be invited on this day to contribute a gift to the seminary for a student aid endowment, as part of a second one million five hundred dollar phase of its 150th Anniversary Thank Offering; and be it finally

*Resolved* that the synod urge all in the church to pray the rich and abiding blessing of Almighty God upon Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, its faculty, administration, staff, students, and programs of instruction, that the seminary may continue to provide the church with many able ministers of the New Testament for service in this country and in mission fields overseas through the years to come.