

# The **LUTHERAN** **CLARION**



**Lutheran Concerns Association**  
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## **Our Concordia System: The Dying of the Light or Light from Above?**

*Rev. Kevin D. Vogts gave the following presentation at the January 2012 Lutheran Concerns Conference in Fort Wayne, Indiana.*

### **Introduction**

On June 13, 1926, a new campus was dedicated for Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Special trains were run throughout the Midwest, bringing up to 100,000 to the event.<sup>1</sup> Eighty-seven years after the seminary's humble beginnings in 1839 in a log cabin hand hewn by the faculty,<sup>2</sup> this extraordinary new campus represented the pinnacle not only of nine decades of growth and development for the seminary, but also for the entire higher educational system of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. What seemed in 1839 to be laughably ambitious goals for higher education in the LCMS<sup>3</sup> had, through the extraordinary devotion, sacrifice, and hard work of our forefathers, become a flourishing reality.

This sentiment was beautifully ensconced in stained-glass in the seminary's grand new board room. At the center of the massive window is the seal of Concordia Seminary, with its motto *ἀνωθεν τὸ φῶς*, "Light from Above." Surrounding the seminary's seal are the seals of other LCMS higher educational institutions in existence at the time.<sup>4</sup> This window epitomizes the ideal of LCMS higher education: a unified system of higher educational institutions, crowned by the seminaries, for the purpose of preparing pastors, as well as other workers, for service to the congregations of Synod. Although some of these schools have since closed, including regrettably my own alma mater, St. John's College, Winfield, Kansas;<sup>5</sup> some have relocated, such as Concordia, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to Mequon, Wisconsin; and some have been added, such as Concordia, Ann Arbor, Michigan, what is remarkable is the stability of this "system" and these institutions, most of which are still in existence and still serving the Synod.

Another window tells a different story. A stained-glass window in the chapel at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, commemorates seminal events in the history of American Lutheranism—including the founding of Concordia Seminary, with the familiar log cabin beautifully rendered in stained-glass and the caption, "Log Cabin College, 1839."<sup>6</sup> It is ironic that a chapel at a college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has the only

representation I know of in stained-glass of the original Concordia Seminary. The other stunning windows in this chapel beautifully depict all aspects of traditional Lutheran theology.<sup>7</sup> However, the sad irony in this case is that in 2007 St. Olaf appointed a Hindu to be chairman of their theology department.<sup>8</sup> Although these windows were only installed in the 1950's, what they so exquisitely portray has already been repudiated, not only by this institution, but for the most part by all the higher educational institutions of the ELCA.

**"Access to independent funding often provided the first inspiration to the colleges that they might stand on their own."**

James Tunstead Burtchaeil

This sad story has been repeated with hundreds of colleges of every denomination. Almost all the private colleges in the United States were originally begun by Christians expressly for the purpose of preparing pastors and parochial school teachers and otherwise propagating the faith. Consider, for instance, the "Rules of Harvard," or student handbook, from 1636:

Let every student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life, John 17:3, and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning.<sup>9</sup>

Though, of course, from our perspective most of these schools and those who founded them were heterodox, generally they were of a conservative, "Bible-believing" bent. However, almost all of these institutions have radically departed from their original Christian foundation and are now bastions of secular liberalism. For example, Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, Illinois, was founded in 1871 by the German Evangelical Synod to train

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pre-seminary students and parochial school teachers. Its early history reads like one of our Concordias—an emphasis on Latin and Greek, all classes conducted in German until 1917, women not admitted until 1930.<sup>10</sup> However, this year they have the distinction of becoming the very first American college to add a declaration of “Sexual Orientation” to their application, with plans for preferred enrollment and special scholarships for homosexual applicants.<sup>11</sup>



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There is much remaining work to be done to return our Synod to the Church of our Grandfathers and Reformation fathers! The Lutheran Concerns Association is dedicated to the effort to reclaim our full Lutheran heritage for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, but we cannot achieve this long-range goal alone.

We need your continued help so that a truly Lutheran church body will be there for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren. In some small way we at the Lutheran Concerns Association desire to be helpful in preserving our faith, under the Lord’s blessing, so that the treasure of pure doctrine and right practice will be known for generations yet to come.

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By the way, as unbelievable as it may seem, this same pattern of disengagement and secularization eventually afflicts even the seminaries of these denominations. An ELCA acquaintance from our area enrolled several years ago at an ELCA seminary. He was part of the “Word Alone” movement and had visions—perhaps now dashed!—of restoring the ELCA. I bumped into him on a visit home and he related how his first semester he had six professors—all of them female, none of them Lutheran! As best he could determine there was a Methodist, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, and even an agnostic or atheist. When he inquired about this with the academic dean, she replied, “You wouldn’t want us to discriminate in hiring faculty on the basis of their religion, would you? We need the most qualified professors, and their personal religious beliefs are irrelevant.” *At a seminary!*

A number of books have been written examining this phenomenon of the secularization of Christian institutions of higher education. Perhaps the most comprehensive is *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches* by James Tunstead Burtchaell. His analysis is very sobering for us in the LCMS. He concluded already in 1998 that our Synod’s institutions of higher education were in the midst

of the process of disengagement that he delineates.<sup>12</sup> He explains the oft-repeated pattern:

Access to independent funding often provided the first inspiration to the colleges that they might stand on their own. The patronage of the churches was often stingy. . . . As the colleges gained in . . . financial stability, they . . . tended to loosen their liaisons . . . the colleges naturally began to think themselves less answerable to the churches.<sup>13</sup>

In his numerous case studies Burtchaell documents how when an institution ceases to receive substantial financial support from a denomination, theological ties are also soon severed.

In the past several decades subsidy from the Synod for our institutions of higher education has been virtually eliminated. Although alumni and other individual members and congregations of the LCMS contribute directly to their support, this does not have the same effect. From the standpoint of Burtchaell’s thesis, the Synod’s institutions of higher education are now much like the “floating lady” magic trick: Despite the lack of evident supportive financial ties to the Synod, to a surprising degree their bond to the Synod somehow still remains magically intact.

However, the Synod and its schools are at a critical crossroads. Will our institutions go the way of those of so many other denominations? Or, will we be able to retain—and as needed recapture—the ideal of a Concordia system in service to the Synod? Will the future of our Concordias follow the path of “The Dying of the Light,” or will they remain true to the “Light from Above”?

**Transformation to Self-Supporting Institutions**

After reviewing the steadily declining financial support from the LCMS for its schools, Burtchaell concludes, “The reason they have survived is . . . [the] entrepreneurial resourcefulness of the individual campuses.”<sup>14</sup> This can be seen in the *Annual Report* of Concordia University Wisconsin (CUW). Last year’s revenues for CUW were as follows:

Tuition.....	\$79,500,000
Governmental Grants.....	\$600,000
Gifts.....	\$6,700,000
Auxiliary Enterprises.....	\$9,800,000
Net Investment Results.....	\$5,400,000
Other.....	\$400,000
<b>Total Revenue .....</b>	<b>\$98,300,000<sup>15</sup></b>

You will notice a category conspicuous by its absence: Synodical support. I am not sure if this would be included under “Gifts” or “Other.” What portion of CUW’s nearly \$100,000,000 in revenue last year came from the coffers of the LCMS? I suspect a specific figure is not assigned because I know from my previous experience as Director of Communications and Church Relations in the Advancement Department at CUW that there are divergent views among the administration of the Synod and its schools about what should be included as Synodical support.

An obvious category would be direct operational subsidy. But, should gifts given to an institution by LCMS congregations be considered Synodical support? What about gifts from alumni or other individuals who are LCMS? When I served at CUW, LCMS congregations, alumni, and other individuals collectively gave much more annually to the institution than the “corporate Synod” per se. However, in addition to direct operational subsidy the Synod also provides indirect support in a variety of ways, the value of which is difficult to measure, such as insurance, auditing, bond and loan guarantees, administrative and legal services, etc. For this reason it is difficult to assign a specific dollar figure or percentage to Synodical support.

However, from my experience I believe it would be generous to estimate the value of Synod’s direct and indirect support for CUW last year, not including gifts from LCMS congregations and alumni or other individuals, at \$1,000,000. That means only about 1% of the institution’s revenue is from the body that ostensibly owns and operates it.

#### **Advancement Challenges and Tuition Dependence**

Over the past several decades the Synod has transformed its Concordias from heavily subsidized to almost entirely self-supporting. However, compared to most American institutions of higher education, the LCMS schools got involved very late in institutional advancement. At one time they were actually discouraged by the Synodical administration from advancement activity, because it was thought to distract from contributions to the Synod as a whole, and they seemed assured of continued generous support from the Synodical treasury. Another limiting factor for advancement is that the alumni base of the Concordias includes large numbers of pastors, teachers, and other Church workers, both active and retired, who generally are not able to give major gifts to the same degree as alumni of other schools.

As a result, all our Concordias have relatively new advancement programs and accordingly smaller endowments and annual gifts than many similar institutions. For example, as noted above in 2010-2011, CUW received gifts of \$6,700,000, while in 2009-2010, the ELCA’s much smaller St. Olaf College—with about half the size student body<sup>16</sup>—received gifts of \$15,400,000.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, the LCMS “For the Sake of the Church” joint endowment initiative has had limited success toward its goal of \$400,000,000, raising only about \$197,000,000 so far among all ten Concordias.<sup>18</sup> Even that impressive sounding goal is modest relative to most institutions. By comparison, in 2009 the average American institution of higher education had an endowment—for a single institution—of \$371,000,000.<sup>19</sup>

**“The original model of the Concordia system has thus been turned on its head over the past few decades.”**

This has led to the LCMS institutions relying inordinately on tuition to cover their operating expenses. At CUW last year tuition earned \$79,500,000 toward expenses of \$81,500,000, or 98%.<sup>20</sup>

By comparison, in 2009-2010 tuition at St. Olaf earned \$108,000,000 toward operating expenses of \$151,000,000, or only 72%.<sup>21</sup>

This heavy reliance upon tuition to cover operating expenses accounts for the plethora of new programs at the Concordias, which combined now offer an astonishing 160 undergraduate and 50 graduate programs!<sup>22</sup>

There is also a long-term advantage to offering degrees in such fields as business, law, and medicine, because over time the institution will build up an alumni base with greater resources to support their alma mater.

#### **Unintended Consequences—Negative and Positive**

Making the Concordias almost entirely self-supporting by relying on what Burtchaell aptly describes as the “entrepreneurial resourcefulness of the individual campuses” has a variety of unintended consequences. The most obvious is the exponential increase in the number of students preparing for careers outside the Church as compared to those preparing for full-time service to the Church. Last fall’s combined undergraduate and graduate Concordia enrollment was 28,421, an increase of 3.5% over the previous year and marking the 19th consecutive year of combined enrollment growth.<sup>23</sup> However, of those 1,762 or 6.2% are preparing for full-time Church work.<sup>24</sup> It seems inevitable that what is supposed to be the “tail” of non-Church work programs, students, administrators, and professors will eventually begin to “wag the dog” of the institutions. For instance, CUW recently hired 30 new professors just for its new School of Pharmacy<sup>25</sup>—more than the entire faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne,<sup>26</sup> and nearly that of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis!<sup>27</sup>

The original model of the Concordia system has thus been turned on its head over the past few decades. My now-defunct alma mater was founded by a businessman<sup>28</sup> and was the first LCMS institution to offer, somewhat controversially at the time, non-Church work programs from its founding in 1893.<sup>29</sup> Only very gradually and tentatively did other LCMS institutions follow suit.<sup>30</sup> But now, as we have seen, the primary reason for which these institutions were originally founded, preparing pastors, teachers, and other Church workers for the Synod, has receded, and their focus, de facto if not *de jure*, naturally becomes the nearly 94% of their students *not* preparing for Church vocations. Are there any *positive* aspects to this development, apart from the tuition income that has allowed the schools to remain open?

I once asked a very conservative LCMS pastor, who was an alumnus of CUW and taught theology part-time to CUW adult degree completion students, how he felt about the expansion of CUW well beyond the almost exclusive focus on Church work students during his student years.

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I thought he might consider it to be a negative development, but he said, "It's the best thing Concordia ever did! I'm teaching confessional Lutheran theology to students I would never come into contact with." He went on to recount how over the years a number of these students, with divergent religious backgrounds including cults, had begun attending his congregation and been converted.

You may not realize this same phenomenon occurred with the President of CUW, Rev. Dr. Patrick T. Ferry, and Rev. Dr. R. Reed Lessing, Dean of the Graduate School at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and author of several volumes in the new Concordia Commentary series. My friends Pat and Reed were natives of Denver who attended St. John's College for one reason: to play sports. I'm not sure what programs they originally enrolled in, but it certainly wasn't Church work because when they started their studies they were not Christians. They were converted through required readings in the Book of Concord for a doctrine class. I remember vividly Pat in the dorm with his Book of Concord, bubbling over with enthusiasm reminiscent of the line, "How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed." Both Pat and Reed not only became devout LCMS Lutherans, they went on to become pastors and scholars, earning doctorates respectively in Reformation history and the Old Testament. This is an example of *positive* unintended consequences from the expansion of our Concordia system beyond Church work students. I knew of many similar examples among the student body during my years at CUW, and each year the Concordias rejoice to celebrate many student Baptisms and Confirmations.

Another benefit is LCMS students who never considered a career in Church work until they matriculated at one of our institutions for some non-Church work program. As Director of Church Relations at CUW, I had some role in Church worker recruitment and this was our greatest pool of candidates, as they matured in their faith through theology classes, chapel services, Bible studies, and other campus experiences.

### Back to Wittenberg

In addition to such possible positive benefits of adding non-Church work programs, it would seem that the Lutheran understanding of the doctrine of vocation<sup>31</sup> actually fits well with these changes in our Concordia system. A good case can be made that Martin Luther and his colleagues and successors at the University of Wittenberg, particularly Philip Melancthon, invented the modern university, with programs not only in theology, but also liberal arts, law, and medicine.<sup>32</sup> The only room I couldn't enter with my master key on CUW's sprawling campus was the cadaver lab, which requires a special passcode per government regulations. Five centuries ago medical students at the first Lutheran university also dissected human bodies, in that day a rare and advanced practice.<sup>33</sup> In some ways we are going back to our Wittenberg roots by expanding the horizons of our Concordias.

However, the long list of American institutions of higher education originally founded as Church-related but now entirely secularized, including not a few that were once deeply and distinctly Lutheran,<sup>34</sup> is a sobering reminder that all will be for naught if we do not retain—and as needed recapture—in our Concordias their unique confessional Lutheran character.

### Thank You...

#### ...to Balance-Concord, Inc.

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### Where Do We Go from Here?

I have heard comments to the effect that the Concordia system is broken beyond repair and should be "spun off" or otherwise dissociated from the Synod. I would consider that to be extremely poor stewardship for a variety of reasons.

From a strictly financial standpoint, the recent example of KFUE illustrates how the expected gains may not be realized, and outweighed by other losses to the Synod, financial and otherwise, when we sell such assets, which were diligently built up by our forefathers over the generations at great sacrifice:

Years later Walther informed readers of *Der Lutheraner* that the construction of this log cabin school occasioned shaking of the heads about the wisdom of this venture.

The reason for such skepticism was the knowledge that nearly all involved in this educational enterprise did not know if they would have food on their table the next day.<sup>35</sup>

Any one of our Concordias represents a critical mass that, even in strictly financial terms, would cost exponentially more to recreate than we could ever receive from disposing of it. For example, last year I visited for the first time Concordia College, Selma, Alabama. I was pleasantly surprised to find a large, beautiful campus, recently more than doubled in size by purchasing an adjacent Methodist institution and now larger than several other Concordias, with a complement of attractive, modern buildings. Among many surprises, I had no idea they would have—part of their campus even before the recent expansion—a splendid new field house as large as Mequon's, which includes one of the few indoor competitive swimming pools among the Concordias. It's also a plus that the Methodist institution they acquired has given them one of the loveliest little collegiate chapels in the LCMS.

A prominent conservative suggested to me that it could be more efficient and just as good, perhaps better, to educate teachers for our parochial schools at state institutions, with some online courses in doctrine, since “Our taxes are paying for it already anyway.” One need look no further than the parochial schools of the Roman Catholic Church to see how this would completely change the character of our Lutheran parochial schools. CUW’s Mequon campus was built by the School Sisters of Notre Dame in 1960 to accommodate 2,000 sisters training to be parochial school teachers. They never had more than a few hundred, and by 1980 were down to 20 sisters in residence.

**“Refocus the Synod on its stated primary objectives to ‘Recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional Church workers . . . and to support Synodical colleges, universities, and seminaries...”**

The decline in religious vocations in the Roman Catholic Church has led to the near complete elimination of members of religious orders—their equivalent of our rostered teachers—serving in their parochial schools. Roman Catholics complain in online forums about supposedly Roman Catholic schools that don’t even have any Roman Catholic laity on their faculty, let alone a member of a religious order: “My child is going to a Catholic school, which has teachers that are Baptist, Lutheran, and Presbyterian... The school board is a hodgepodge of Christians as well.”<sup>36</sup> Our parochial education system is one of the great strengths of the LCMS. But, without our Concordias preparing Synodically educated and rostered teachers, our schools will likewise lose their Lutheran character and devolve into just good private schools.

By the way, selling off campuses and going to online education to raise and save money for the Synod won’t stop with the Concordia University System. A few years ago when a conservative leader seemed to be suggesting consolidation of our seminaries, I asked if he thought we only need one seminary (by comparison the ELCA has ten).<sup>37</sup> He replied, “We don’t need any seminaries. Haven’t you heard of the University of Phoenix, the largest, most successful university in the world? It can all be done online. Bricks and mortar are a model of the past.”

Another misperception is that modern transportation makes a multitude of geographically dispersed institutions unnecessary, or that our schools are poorly distributed. However, a recent study showed that 56% of college students nationwide attend an institution less than 100 miles from home.<sup>38</sup> My three sisters and I “represent that remark,” since St. John’s College was only 85 miles from home, and we all attended there and became the first Church workers in our family. I can remember sitting on the living room floor when I was six years old listening to the campus pastor recruit my oldest sister. That visit resulted in three teachers and one pastor with over 125 years combined service to the Synod,

and the next generation in our family with five Concordia graduates so far. As J.W. Behnken noted:

Only the schools at . . . Austin and Ann Arbor were established by Synod as such. All the others . . . were started as local projects by Lutherans who were convinced that their area needed such an institution. . . . Though started largely through local initiative, they are well distributed. . . . It must be viewed as nothing short of providential that many . . . were located in areas where larger concentrations of Synod’s membership are found . . . we have good reason to bless the vision which prompted these Lutherans to open them. Because college was “not too far from home,” many parents were persuaded to enroll their youngster to study for the preaching and teaching ministry. Quite a number of pastors and teachers have indicated to me that they probably would not be in the ministerial or teaching office had there not been a Synodical school “handy.”<sup>39</sup>

Though that may sound quaint in today’s world, I have sat many times around a kitchen table with a potential pre-seminary student and his parents, and it is still a very accurate picture.

### Some Suggestions

- Look at our Concordia University System with missionary eyes. How can we best use this resource passed down to us? For example, when I visited Kenya with President Harrison several years ago there were many young Lutherans there going to various European countries to obtain undergraduate or graduate degrees in areas such as nursing and other medical fields, business, and education. Our schools have excellent programs in all those subjects. What a blessing it would be in so many ways, for both them and us, for our brother and sister Lutherans from other lands to come and study at our Concordias!
- Refocus the Synod on its stated primary objectives to “Recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional Church workers . . . and to support Synodical colleges, universities, and seminaries,”<sup>40</sup> and accordingly increase direct Synodical operating subsidy for the Concordias, tied to the number of Church work students and foreign Lutheran students. During a period beginning in the late 1990’s when several Concordias offered greatly increased grants for Church work students<sup>41</sup> there was a significant increase in Church work enrollment.<sup>42</sup> However, due to declining Synodical subsidy they were not able to maintain this increased aid, and Church work enrollments have subsequently declined.<sup>43</sup>
- Stress to congregations the importance and value of Synodically educated professional Church workers, re-emphasizing at all levels the sentiment expressed in a 1947 Synodical report, “The future of our Church will depend upon the spiritual and the intellectual level of its professional leadership.”<sup>44</sup>
- Instead of developing alternatives to residential Church work education, focus our resources, at both the col-

lege and seminary level, on supporting these programs and students at the Concordias. Extol to young men considering the ministry the virtues not only of residential seminary but also pre-seminary education.

- Be unabashedly, aggressively, confessionally Lutheran! Perhaps in reaction to the secularization of most older Church-related schools, as documented by Burtchaell, there is a trend of new schools being established with a strong emphasis on their Christian and denominational character. The idea that bold faith will turn away students is disproved by such very successful new institutions as Liberty University (Jerry Falwell), Regent University (Pat Robertson), and Ave Maria University (Roman Catholic). If they can do it, we can too! Non-sectarian examples of noted institutions with clearly delineated principles are Hillsdale College, Grove City College, and the new Patrick Henry College, where my old CUW colleague, Dr. Gene Edward Veith, is now provost. Like these schools, our institutions must zealously live up to and advance our core principles. The Lutheran Church has a unique and significant perspective that is lost if we relinquish our heritage and let ourselves founder in the mishmash of generic Protestantism.
- Remember and treasure our classical roots. Another trend in American higher education is a series of new or renewed institutions with an emphasis on classical education. The strong classical roots of our Concordias go back to the “Log Cabin College,” illustrated in the CUW seal by a stack of books labeled Homer, Cicero, and Socrates. A classical education not only serves well the needs of our pre-seminary students but also has great value in a variety of fields such as law and medicine.
- Maintain Synodical ownership and control. The Concordia University System is currently embarking upon a “CUS Task Force on Strengthening Governance.”<sup>45</sup> We should heed the many examples given by Burtchaell of denominations that lessened control over their institutions and soon lost them altogether. On the other hand, Burtchaell strongly criticizes the LCMS for “majoring in minors,” micromanaging its institutions from St. Louis with regard to peripheral matters, while not giving much-needed cohesive strategic direction.<sup>46</sup>
- Strive to elect sound members to the boards of the Concordias and the Concordia University System. The chairman of the latter plays an important role in vetting candidates for presidents of the institutions.<sup>47</sup>
- Appoint competent, charismatic, confessional college presidents. Perhaps the greatest governance the Synod retains over its institutions is the ability to influence to a large extent the selection of their presidents.<sup>48</sup> Over time an institution tends, for good or ill, to take on the character of its president. For example, Elmhurst College cited above was rather conservative until the “brief but transformational presidency” of modernist theologian H. Richard Niebuhr.<sup>49</sup> A positive example is Rev. Dr. Tilahun Menedo, the new president of Concordia, Selma. A native of Ethiopia with a doctorate in missions from Concordia

Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, he has an exciting vision of transforming Selma into *the* international Lutheran institution of higher education for black Lutherans—and there are over 5,000,000 confessional Lutherans in his native Ethiopia alone. As vacancies occur, our Synodical leadership can have a decisive impact on our Concordias by careful selection of men such as Dr. Menedo.

- Burtchaell notes the paradox that Church-related colleges dutifully and punctiliously fulfill all the ever-increasing profusion of requirements imposed by federal, state, and local governments, accrediting agencies, and many other outside groups ranging from the National Collegiate Athletic Association to the American Association of University Professors—but at the same they often

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resist and chafe at modest stipulations from the denominations which founded and perhaps still control or even own them.<sup>50</sup> The LCMS should establish specific benchmarks for its institutions in areas such as the percentage of Church work and other LCMS students, percentage of faculty, staff, and administration who are rostered LCMS workers or LCMS laity, etc. There should also be consideration of spiritual life and commitment in all aspects of the institution to Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and LCMS doctrine and practice. There could be tiers of self-governance granted depending upon the level of fulfillment of these expectations. Reward the institutions that are best fulfilling their mandate from the Synod. Those schools failing to fulfill their mandate would have less self-governance to the point of their operation being taken over by the Synod and administration replaced. In practice we do this already with regard to financial issues.

- All new theological faculty appointments in the Concordia University System (CUS) must be approved by the CUS board, giving an opportunity to shape this key department in these institutions.
- However, liberal transformation of Christian colleges often does not come through the “front door” of the theology department as might be expected, but rather through the “back door” of other disciplines, such as the natural sciences: “Once Christians began adopting a naturalistic view, including evolution or earth history over millions of years, it didn’t take long for the rest of their faith to come crumbling down.”<sup>51</sup> Currently there is concern regarding an account written by a Concordia professor about the “Seine” crisis, which seeks to recast the issues of that critical era through the “back door” of the history depart-

ment. So, we can't put all our eggs in the theology department basket. Confessional Lutheran pastors—campus pastors can obviously be particularly helpful in this regard—must strongly encourage members with appropriate qualifications to apply for positions in all areas at our Concordias, which are specifically allowed under the law to give hiring preference to LCMS members. For example, this is the lengthy list of positions posted in just the current issue of *The Lutheran Witness*: worship arts, communications, business, special education, nursing, art and graphic design, biology, chemistry, English, history, mathematics, athletics, volleyball, natural sciences, physical education, language, resident director, social work, career services, English language learner, human resources, College of Science dean, accounting, and Director of Christian Education studies.<sup>52</sup>

- If there are things that are broken about our Concordias, don't discard them but fix them. An example is the current partnership and possible merger between Concordia, Ann Arbor and CUW.<sup>53</sup>
- Most frustrating are instances where it seems tenets of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions have been overshadowed by tenets of the modern academy, such as academic freedom and political correctness. Seek to resolve the issue with fraternal admonition, Matthew 18, and ultimately the provisions of our Synodical *Handbook*.
- In sum, heed Revelation 2:25: "Only hold on to what you have."

#### Rev. Kevin D. Vogts

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- 1 Carl S. Meyer, *Log Cabin to Luther Tower* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), p. 152.
- 2 Arthur H. Drevlow, et. al., eds., *C.P.A. Walther: The American Luther* (Mankato, Minnesota: Walther Press, 1987), p. 175.
- 3 W.G. Pollack, *Fathers and Founders* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 32 has a picture of the original newspaper advertisement announcing the formation of what became Concordia Seminary, which he translates and then notes, "The citizens of St. Louis must have rubbed their eyes in astonishment when they read this notice."
- 4 David W. Wollenberg, *Campus Symbolism* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1980), pp. 10-11.
- 5 The sad tale is recounted in August R. Suelflow, ed., *Heritage in Motion* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1998), p. 418.
- 6 St. Olaf College, "Boe Memorial Chapel Windows: Lutheranism in America," n.d., retrieved November 23, 2011, <http://www.stolaf.edu/church/chapel/windows/16-america.html>.
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## A Brief Analysis of the Specific Ministry Pastor Program

The Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program is one of six alternate route<sup>1</sup> pastoral ministry programs offered by Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne offers two alternate route programs: Certificate and SMP.

The SMP program was adopted in convention in 2007 to replace the Distance Education Leading to Ordination (DELTO) program, and to provide one umbrella under which other alternate route studies administered by various districts across the Synod could be gathered. The SMP program is intended to provide ordained pastors to congregations and/or mission settings which cannot support a full time pastor or missionary. In addition, the reso-

lution adopting the SMP program added “such categories as church planter, staff pastor, and others as needs arise.” The resolution also asserted that SMP is needed because of our Synod’s resolution to plant 2,000 new congregations by 2017.<sup>2</sup>

While the intentions of the SMP program may be laudable, there are serious concerns over how districts and congregations are using the program, the criteria by which men enter the program, and the standard by which they are educated. The following chart, derived from the 2011-12 seminary catalogues, allows for a very basic analysis of SMP, Certificate, and Master of Divinity program requirements.<sup>3</sup> The Certificate route is included because

SMP (alternate)	Certificate (alternate)	Master of Divinity (regular)
<u>Application Requirements:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LCMS member two years.</li> <li>• Adequate post-secondary work.</li> </ul>	<u>Application Requirements:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LCMS member two years.</li> <li>• Bachelor degree.</li> </ul>	<u>Application Requirements:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LCMS member two years.</li> <li>• Bachelor degree.</li> </ul>
<u>Entry Level Competence:</u> <sup>4</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Old Testament</li> <li>• New Testament</li> <li>• Doctrine</li> </ul>	<u>Entry Level Competence:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Old Testament</li> <li>• New Testament</li> <li>• Doctrine</li> <li>• Greek</li> </ul>	<u>Entry Level Competence:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Old Testament</li> <li>• New Testament</li> <li>• Doctrine</li> <li>• Hebrew</li> <li>• Greek</li> </ul>
<u>Course of Study:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sixteen Online Classes (48 credits)</li> <li>• Periodic cohorts (residential seminars)</li> </ul>	<u>Course of Study:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 103 credits Saint Louis.</li> <li>• 95 credits Fort Wayne.</li> </ul>	<u>Course of Study:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 111 credits Saint Louis.</li> <li>• 139 credits Fort Wayne.</li> </ul>
<u>Vicarage:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upon entry into program.</li> <li>• At location of membership.</li> <li>• During the first eight classes.</li> </ul> <u>Ordination:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes place after the first eight classes.</li> </ul>	<u>Vicarage:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One academic year.</li> <li>• After completion of first two years of classes.</li> <li>• Worth eighteen credits.</li> </ul> <u>Ordination:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes place after vicarage, unless more course work needs to be completed.</li> </ul>	<u>Vicarage:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One academic year.</li> <li>• After completion of first two years of classes.</li> <li>• Worth eighteen credits.</li> <li>• Return to seminary for fourth year of studies.</li> </ul> <u>Ordination:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes place after fourth year.</li> </ul>
<u>Academic Degree:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None, a certificate is issued.</li> </ul>	<u>Academic Degree:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None, a certificate is issued.</li> </ul>	<u>Academic Degree:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master of Divinity.</li> </ul>
<u>Restrictions:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot hold an elected or appointed office.</li> <li>• Cannot serve as circuit counselor.</li> <li>• Cannot serve as a voting delegate to a national Synod convention.</li> <li>• Cannot supervise a vicar.</li> </ul>	<u>Restrictions:</u> none.	<u>Restrictions:</u> none.

This comparison demonstrates significant differences in requirements for men preparing to serve in the Pastoral Office. The primary difference between the Certificate route and the Master of Divinity is the requirement of Biblical Hebrew and the theological classes involved in the study and application of that language.<sup>5</sup> SMP has no post-secondary education degrees required. It omits Hebrew and Greek. It requires less than half of the academic work. Vicarage, a critical time of a seminarian's preparation, is, for all intents and purposes, omitted. Ordination into the Pastoral Office takes place after a mere two years. While the SMP is encouraged to continue his studies into the traditional route and he is to be supervised as long as he remains an SMP, there is no guarantee he will continue his studies, and the viability of long-term supervision is questionable at best.

How can a man who has received less than half of the training of certificate route, and no training in the Biblical languages, be "able to teach,"<sup>6</sup> or "hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict"?<sup>7</sup> While the Biblical languages certainly are not the sole criteria for determining the viability of the program, not having that sort of training certainly binds a man to whatever English translation he prefers, and he will never know or understand the depth and width and height that the Holy Spirit provides through the Biblical languages. Are we laying hands on too hastily<sup>8</sup> in ordaining men after a mere two years, or eight classes, of instruction? How does ordaining a man into the Pastoral Office with a mere eight classes (24 credits) under his belt and no Biblical languages really square with Augsburg Confession articles V<sup>9</sup> and XIV?<sup>10</sup>

The SMP program was adopted as a way to meet expressed needs of pastoral ministry apart from current residential models. Its authors claim a desire for "missional pastoral leadership driven by the depth of theological integrity that remains a hallmark of our church and its ministerium."<sup>11</sup> The SMP program, as it currently stands, hardly lives up to this purported high standard. It seems there is more of an enthrallment with context, culture, and relevance, combined with perceived emergencies and needs, which only end up undermining and demeaning the Pastoral Office on the whole. And while there are examples in our Synod's history of various alternate routes, these were the exception rather than the rule. The SMP program itself needs to be guided into a higher standard comparable to that of the Master of Divinity. The Scriptures, the Confessions, and the history of the church and the LCMS, give us ample examples of characteristics and training for the Pastoral Office. Perhaps this can be addressed more fully at another time.

Here is a thought to ponder from a secular standpoint: If educational and professional standards were lessened and diminished for medical doctors, one could only imagine how that would affect the standard of medical care a patient would receive, not to mention the drastic effects

on medical research. Why would we expect anything less from the training standards for the Pastoral Office and the impact that will have on our doctrine and practice and the care of souls?

We must insist on maintaining high standards of education, not less.<sup>12</sup>

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**[Editorial Staff Note:** *Pastor Thompson is a preacher's son whose father served Trinity Lutheran Church in Cedar Rapids, IA, which had a membership of just under 2,000. Pastor Thompson vicared at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Billings, MT, which has two pastors and nearly 700 members. Billings is a metropolitan area. His first call was to St. Paul Lutheran, Beach, ND and St. Peter Lutheran Church, Belfield, ND. He thus has experienced a full range of congregation sizes as well as geographic settings and understands what Biblical and Confessional pastoral ministry really requires and is.*]

- 1 Certificate (formerly called colloquy), Cross-Cultural Ministry Center (CCMC), Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS), Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP), Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) and Deaf Institute of Theology (DIT)
- 2 Resolution 5-10B Convention Proceedings 2007, 63rd Regular Convention, the LCMS, Houston, Texas, July 14-19, 2007 [Saint Louis: 2007], p. 133-136.
- 3 While exceptions are allowed for in the admission process, the basic information presented in this chart is the general rule.
- 4 Incoming students are required to show entry level competency in these areas through previous studies or course work offered by the seminaries, and competency exams administered by the seminaries.
- 5 Lack of any Biblical language study is a critical issue in any preparation for the Pastoral Office. It would be best if men seeking the Office enrolled in the traditional residential Master of Divinity program which is proven in providing highly qualified men for the Pastoral Office.
- 6 1 Timothy 3:2
- 7 Titus 1:9 (New American Standard Bible)
- 8 1 Timothy 5:22
- 9 That we may obtain this faith, the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith; where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake (Concordia Triglot, p. 45).
- 10 Of Ecclesiastical Order they teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called. (Concordia Triglot, p. 49).
- 11 Resolution 5-10B Convention Proceedings 2007, 63rd Regular Convention, the LCMS, Houston, Texas, July 14-19, 2007 [Saint Louis: 2007], p. 133.
- 12 The SMP program is really only one aspect in a broader story of alternate routes into the Pastoral Office. Concordia Seminary in St. Louis offers three other alternate routes which require no more than SMP: Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS), Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) and Deaf Institute of Theology (DIT).



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