

"Portrait of a Pastor: A Biographical Essay
on the Reverend Joel C. Gerlach"

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Foreword and Acknowledgements

The very nature of this project demanded that much of the information be gathered through interviews. The essays written by Joel Gerlach and on file at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary proved to be very helpful in preparing for the interviews. The majority of this paper comes from my primary source, Pastor Gerlach. Footnotes are given to indicate when other sources were used.

I am grateful to those who shared their time with me to help me write this paper. Professors Balge, Jeske and Kuske offered me the insight of their years of service as colleagues with Professor Gerlach at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Through their eyes I learned to see Gerlach as a respected colleague and friend.

To Professor Braun of Wisconsin Lutheran College and Professor Tiefel of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, I owe my thanks. They offered me the perspective that only students of Professor Gerlach can give.

My thanks go especially to my pastor, Pastor Joel Gerlach, who graciously allowed me to use his life's experience as the subject for my senior church history paper. Through the three afternoons we spent together he taught me more than just the facts. He shared his love for the Lord's work and inspired me to look forward to my own days of service that are fast approaching.

And in all things, thanks and praise to the Lord of the Church, who blesses his children with servants like Joel Gerlach.

April 30, 1995

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Introduction

A lot of eventful years have passed since Joel Gerlach came into this world on November 27, 1928. To date, the Lord has blessed Pastor Gerlach with forty-two years in the ministry and counting. Gerlach's years of ministry have covered one fourth of the synod's existence. He has learned a great deal guided by the Lord through 67 years of history. The following pages attempt to capture some of the experiences of Joel Gerlach. Maybe it will allow others to learn from his varied experiences.

In a sense, this paper has become a sketch or portrait of a humble servant's ministry. If others don't necessarily agree with my rendition, that's to be expected. I have offered my view of a man and his life's work. My perspective was limited. No doubt the picture would have been greatly enhanced through more input from his wife. So expect that certain impressions of the man will seem lacking detail and life. But the paper is what it is because I paused to gaze on a man's service for the Lord. His service at the Seminary caught my eye. So I pondered those details a little longer than the rest of his life. As I assembled the details to create my impression of Joel Gerlach, I may have left out details that others would have considered essential. The details I included were essential for the impression I intended. This is my portrait of the Reverend Joel C. Gerlach.

Part 1

Preparation for the Pastoral Ministry

1928-1953

Americans tried to give thanks in 1970 when the Thanksgiving holiday rolled around. But they were finding it easier to complain about the spiraling inflation, the Nixon administration, and the war in Vietnam. Vietnam was foremost on the mind of most Americans. Who could forget about it? With 540,000 American troops in Vietnam, who didn't know a brother, friend, or at least friend of a friend over there? Even if you wanted to forget, the networks kept reminding you. Body counts and graphic footage of the war came into America's living rooms through the wonder of television.

With the thoughts of most Americans focused on the economy and the war, there was at least one small group of Americans on November 25, 1970, with a more important matter to consider. Pastor Charles Found opened up his home for the customary pastor get-together at thanksgiving. On that particular thanksgiving, the topic at Pastor Found's home in California, didn't remain centered around the economy or the war in Vietnam. More pressing at the time was the call that Gerlach was considering, the call to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Gerlach made up his mind from the day he received the call; there was just no way he could accept the call to the Seminary. He was being asked to teach systematic theology and homiletics. Pastor Gerlach didn't see himself as a scholar -- not the sort that is needed at the Seminary.

Pastor Paul Nitz, chairman of the Seminary Board of Control, contacted Gerlach by phone to tell him that he had the call.

Gerlach was at a pastors' conference at Grace Lutheran Church in Tucson, Arizona, when he got the call. He politely listened but never thought he should take it.

Gerlach had barely returned to California from the conference when Norm Berg called. Norm Berg, then serving as administrator for home missions, gave Gerlach twenty minutes worth of reasons why he should accept the call. Again, he politely listened to the advice, but still couldn't see himself serving the synod as a seminary professor. Time passed, and Gerlach was convinced he would return it.

But the Thanksgiving fellowship at Pastor Found's house influenced Gerlach's deliberation. He naturally expressed his reluctance to his fellow pastors. Looking back he explains, "My Hebrew was abominable and my Greek skills were minimal. I wondered how would I ever teach Dogmatics. Dogmatics is simply exegesis systematized." The comments his brothers made, the advice that they gave, made Gerlach reconsider his initial decision.

"With fear and trepidation, I accepted the call to the Seminary."

On January 24, 1971, Gerlach was installed as professor of Homiletics and Systematic Theology at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. He resolved to commit himself to the task and serve the Lord well at the Seminary. He did so for a decade. Gerlach brought into the classroom a desire to illustrate the practicality of God's Word in our lives, a desire to help his students communicate that Word more clearly, and a wealth of

experience from the home mission field. Drawing upon his knowledge of Scripture and his years of making that Scripture apply to his own life and the lives of others, Pastor Gerlach wanted to help his students understand and live the Great Commission. He wanted them to know what it meant to make disciples and put that into practice. Making disciples is what it was all about.

As often happens, we take note of individuals when they reach a certain position of prominence and importance. Although the position of professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is a position of service to students and the synod, it is also a position of a certain amount of prominence. Let's just say that people are more likely to notice a pastor who serves on the "hill" as opposed to the majority of pastors who serve in the parish. So that's when most people in the synod began to notice and pay attention to Gerlach.

If the synod noticed Gerlach when he took the call to be professor of homiletics and dogmatics, they surely noticed when he took a call to be mission counselor. The question his decision has raised is why? Why would anyone take a call away from the Seminary? The Lord had called men away from the Seminary before. Most left in a pine box. Others retired. A few left under a cloud of controversy. J.P. Koehler's involvement in the Protestant Conference led to the termination of his seminary call.² Reim declared himself out of fellowship with the WELS and later joined the CLC over the delay in

² Fredrich, E.C., *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, 1992, p 162.

splitting with Missouri.² No one had ever left the Seminary by taking a call to another field. Why did Gerlach leave? His health wasn't at issue. He certainly didn't leave under a cloud of doctrinal controversy. Why did he leave? If we try to answer that question, we must first ask a few more questions. Why did he take the call to the Seminary? What did he bring to the Seminary that would allow him to contribute to the training of future pastors? It's useful to ask such questions. The questions are even more useful if we can find answers. If we're looking for answers, we might have to begin looking before 1981 and we probably should look somewhere other than Mequon.

Arlington

Arlington, Minnesota would be a good place to start our quest. Joel Gerlach's involvement in making disciples and training other men as disciple makers didn't begin in 1971 when he was installed at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. It started forty-three years earlier, and hundreds of miles away in Arlington, Minnesota. In 1928, a child was born to Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Gerlach. They had him baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. That's where the story of Joel Gerlach, child of God, begins. At his baptism, the Lord recruited Joel to be his own child. The discipling process that began with Joel's baptism continued as his parents strove to bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

² *Proceedings of the Thirty-fourth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, 1957, pp 118-130.*

The first thirteen years of his discipleship were spent in Arlington. At a time in our nation's history when a great deal of political and social turmoil^a effected the very fabric of our society, the people in Arlington were by and large unaffected. In that regard they were typical of so many small Minnesota communities. The little Minnesota community had all the charm and challenges of Garrison Keillor's Lake Wobegon. It was conservative to the core and ruled by a majority of Lutherans. There was a Catholic church, but it wasn't half the size of St. Paul's Lutheran Church. The one feature that distinguished Arlington from Keillor's Lake Wobegon was its ethnic identity. Instead of being primarily Scandinavian, it was German-Russian.

Nearly one thousand people made Arlington their home in 1928 when Joel was born. Most who attended church went to St. Paul's Lutheran Church. As might be expected, much of Joel's early years revolved around the church and its activities. Possibly even more so than his peers, Joel's life was influenced by St. Paul's. He was the son of St. Paul's day school principal. His father served as principal and one of two teachers for the 100 students enrolled in the school.

Had Joel been given the opportunity to select his favorite teacher, it wouldn't have been his father. As he was growing up, he felt his father was unfair in the way he treated him. He thought that his father was stern with him at times, even treating him more strictly than the other students. Pastor Gerlach later learned his Father was equitable in his treatment

of all his students, including Joel. That didn't make it any easier for Joel at the time.

Joel also grew up feeling somewhat inferior to his older siblings, especially his brother Vernon, the genius of the family. Somehow he always got the impression that a true son was like Vernon. Joel didn't see himself as matching the pattern.

If life was tough for Joel at school, it wasn't any easier for his family. That's not a reflection on Joel's father. The Great Depression had taken its toll in Arlington. It was hard to take care of a growing family in those days. But at least Arlington had the advantage of being a farming community.

No one starved in the Gerlach household, thanks to the Lord's providence through the generosity of the local farmers. Months often passed without Mr. Gerlach getting paid. To help support the principal and his family, the farmers shared what they could. When cash was hard to come by, they gave the Gerlachs fresh eggs and meat. Whatever the farmers gave went to good use. The surplus eggs were traded at the local store for other necessary housewares. To supply what his family needed in the dairy group, Mr. Gerlach parked a cow in the garage instead of a car.

The Gerlachs were poor, but the Lord provided. One of his provisions was a healthy measure of frugality, something that sticks with Joel to this day. Perhaps all the times he followed the ice truck, picking up chips of ice, was a living lesson in frugality. When the ice truck went around, Joel's parents would send him out. When it made a stop and the ice-man chipped away

at some ice for a customer, Joel would pick up the pieces that fell to the ground. Hard for us to imagine today.

Life in Arlington was more than just making ends meet and getting an education. Joel Gerlach grew in Arlington. He grew physically and he grew spiritually. That was all part of his discipleship. Looking back on those years, Pastor Gerlach ponders the impressions he first gained about the Church and the work of the Church. First of all, he had no real concept of the work of our synod. St. Paul's wasn't part of the Wisconsin Synod. For that matter, it wasn't part of any synod. It was and still is independent. His views of the ministry were also affected by his experience. He wasn't interested in the teaching ministry based upon the experiences of his father. Much later he would learn that his father's vocation had more of a positive influence on him than he realized at the time. If the teaching ministry didn't appeal to him, neither did the preaching ministry. The first pastor he remembers, Pastor Robert Heidemann, was a strict Prussian pastor. He may have been very warm under his gruff exterior, but it was hard for a child to separate the actual work of the ministry from the only man he saw performing that work. Later John Bradtke would take on the pastoral duties at St. Paul's. He left a more favorable impression.

One particular area of his discipleship that seemed weak at the time was his understanding of the great commission. "I suspect that many of us have been influenced in our understanding

of the great commission by the context in which we first learned
 ..."³

The context in which he first learned about the great commission was Arlington. In that little community of church-going people, Matthew 28:19 always meant getting the gospel message out to the heathen in heathen lands. He never saw adult baptisms or confirmations. So he always thought of the great commission as being carried on out there. "The words of Jesus summoned a picture in my mind of a missionary instructing the unchurched in a foreign land."⁴

Martin Luther Academy, 1942-1946

Nearly a year after the United States declared war on Japan and entered into World War II, Joel Gerlach enrolled at Martin Luther Academy in New Ulm, Minnesota. In 1942, Joel was the fourth Gerlach child to enter the Academy. His father managed to pay for their schooling even on his meager salary. He raised some of the tuition by selling honey in Minneapolis; Mr. Gerlach did some beekeeping as a hobby. The money made from selling the honey to a bakery in Minneapolis was used to send Joel and his siblings through Martin Luther Academy.

By attending Martin Luther Academy, Joel was in no way indicating a preference for the teaching or preaching ministry. In fact, for most of his time at Martin Luther Academy, he thought seriously about a military career. Martin Luther might have been the name-sake for the school he attended, but General

³ Gerlach's recollection is on p 3 of "The Call Into the Discipling Ministry" delivered at The Symposium on the Lutheran Elementary School and Evangelism, April 24-27, 1987.

⁴ Ibid., p 3.

Douglas MacArthur was his hero. He was fascinated with the military and seriously considered enrolling in the military after high school. He had schoolmates who volunteered for the army, and some who were drafted. He was always intrigued by the military. Ever since he was young and saw all the tanks and trucks at Ft. Snelling, he wanted to be a military man. The military had a certain appeal. It offered an exciting way of life, training, and education. After twenty years of serving the country, a soldier could retire and pursue whatever interested him. That interested Joel. The fact that some of his friends were going into the military also influenced Joel.

One thing that did not interest Joel was the teaching track. Even Joel's father didn't encourage him to become a teacher. This was the result of Mr. Gerlach's own personal teaching experience. When Joel was a sophomore in high school, Mr. Gerlach resigned from the teaching ministry for health reasons. He had fifty-eight students in one class. It was just too much for him. Mr. Gerlach would later return to teaching at St. Paul's in New Ulm, but for a few years he served as a campus engineer at Dr. Martin Luther College.

At the urging of his father, Joel did take the pastor track. He wasn't forced into that path. He was strongly encouraged to do so. While his father's encouragement could go only so far, Joel's friends did a good job to get him to consider becoming a pastor.

In the course of instruction at New Ulm, Joel's misconception of the Great Commission didn't change. Maybe he

wasn't listening closely enough when it was discussed. But he still thought of making disciples as something that took place in heathen lands among heathen peoples. But all of that really wasn't foremost on the mind of Joel. High school students usually find more *important* things to do and so did Joel. When he did think about his future vocation, he didn't envision himself in a pulpit. He could ^{more easily} see himself driving a tank or serving in the infantry.

Joel might have become Private Gerlach in 1946, if it hadn't been for the influence of the rest of his friends who were still in New Ulm. With the peace treaties signed by 1946, most of his friends were going on to Northwestern College. The War Department no longer pushed for young men to fight for their country. Until Joel made up his mind as to what he wanted to do, it was easier just to go on with his friends to the synod's next step in the pastor training program in Watertown.

The influence of one very special friend certainly should be mentioned. By this time, Joel had become quite fond of Lillian Bode, also one of his classmates. It became obvious that their friendship would eventually lead to marriage. The thought of Joel going on for another seven, possibly eight more years of training certainly would have affected their plans. Marriage would have been more than difficult for them. It would have been impossible. Northwestern students and Seminary students were not allowed to be married. Joel knew this. Lil knew this too. Knowing full well that any plans for matrimony would have to wait, Lil still encouraged Joel to go on to Northwestern.

College and Seminary Training 1946-1953

In the fall of 1946, Gerlach enrolled at Northwestern College in Watertown. Aside from his visit to West Salem, Wisconsin, when his brother Vernon was assigned to teach at the Lutheran Elementary School in West Salem, this was his first trek out of Minnesota. It was the farthest away from home he had ever been. He would go even farther in years to come.

His first few years at Northwestern were not too good academically. Part of that might ~~still~~ be attributed to his plans for the future. He still didn't know what he wanted to do. One thing he did know for sure, being a pastor ~~still~~ wasn't part of the plan.

It usually is not too hard to tell which students don't plan on continuing in the pastor training course. Their academics often suffer. Whether Gerlach decided to continue as a pastor by his junior year or not, his academic performance began to improve. The class he landed in no doubt helped him along in that direction. Gerlach was in a class on whom so many stars fell. They all pushed each other academically.⁵

Another tell-tale sign about a student's plan to continue or drop out of the pastor training track is his attitude in general. Guys who don't really know what they want to do at Northwestern, stay or go, can develop a bad attitude about everything. To them, the food isn't good enough, the professors are terrible, the housing is lousy. But from day one, Gerlach wasn't a complainer even though he wasn't sure he would be staying for the

⁵ Balge, Richard D., personal interview, April 4, 1995.

duration. "A lot of guys who went through Northwestern couldn't say anything good about it then. But once they get out, it was the most grand experience ever."

Gerlach didn't find much reason to complain. As far as the food was concerned, he was and still is a very unfinnickier eater. "I eat to live; I don't live to eat." He grew up in a home where parents taught respect for others. He felt a little uncomfortable when others were complaining or grouching about the food and just about anything. "My parents instilled in me a respect for others."

Looking back on his years at Northwestern, Pastor Gerlach remarks that there were giants in the earth in those days. Some of them were at Northwestern. Recalling the names of those giants, names like Kowalke, Rhoda, Kiessling, Eickmann and Oswald come to mind. Even if he wasn't always the best student, Joel realized the talent of the men teaching at Northwestern. Some of those men inspired him to reach beyond his past performance and become a better student. Kiessling especially inspired him on toward excellence. Professor Rhoda impressed him as a man with a true heart for students. That was something that Gerlach didn't always find in his past training. Rhoda exemplified a true concern for the individual. Professor Eickmann belonged in the same category.

If there were giants in the earth in those days, some of them were also at the Seminary. Even today, Seminary students hear flattering stories about men like J. P. Meyer and Carl Lawrenz. Some of those stories are worth going into even though

this paper isn't about them. Actually, it is about them and any other Christian who ever touched the life of Gerlach. They are all disciples of Jesus who had a part in discipling Gerlach. The impact they may have had on him is still evident today.

He remembers men like J.P. Meyer. Meyer was an inspiration to the students because of who he was. He wasn't always the most interesting lecturer but he had an authoritative grasp of the material he lectured on. The substance of Meyer goes beyond just his lectures. Meyer was the epitome of dedication, knowledge, and humility. Gerlach finds it hard to imagine a man with more gifts still exemplifying the humility that Meyer showed.

His dedication was evident in his study sessions. Meyer lived in what is now section eight of the dormitory. The students would regularly see him studying at five in the morning and at eleven o'clock at night.

His knowledge was evident in the classroom. He would be lecturing on the epistle to the Romans and happen to lapse into the Greek. He could rattle off Luther's translation of a certain portion of Romans without warning. The students wondered whether he knew all sixteen chapters of Romans in Greek. Meyer also made a point of sharing as much knowledge and no more than was pertinent to the material at hand. This also pertained to the stories he would tell in class. Students seldom, if ever, got him off track just telling stories. His anecdotes from his ministry in the parish were useful. When he told a story it was illustrative, inciteful, and deepened the student's understanding. The stories were always judiciously chosen. He

told stories when it served a purpose, to help get a better grasp of the subject.

The humility of Meyer was evident to the students outside the classroom. By his actions he showed himself to be a servant to the servants. Many times Gerlach and others saw Meyer coming out of his residence into the archway. If a student was approaching the door to the classroom wing of the Seminary, Meyer would beat him to the door and open it for the student. Even at such a moment, he was teaching his students the attitude of a servant, the attitude of Christ Jesus.

There were more men like Meyer. President Reim was a much respected man. He was always under the gun in those days, constantly going to synodical meetings. The synod was in the throes of a controversy with Missouri. He was the head of the Committee for Church Union. Reim wasn't the only professor serving on various synodical committees. Other members of the faculty were called upon to serve just as Reim did. The synod made demands of those men that were hard to understand. It was hard to fathom the work they did outside their teaching load while teaching full-time at the Seminary. The professors were called on to do a lot of theological work. There were constant meetings with synodical boards and committees.

Lawrenz also made it onto Gerlach's list of inspiring professors. "He gave me writer's cramp. I tried to write down everything he said, especially in the Christian Education Class." The students thought he was a master teacher.

Lest we imagine that the years from 1950 through 1953 were without a flaw, perfect in every regard, Gerlach offers commentary to show the contrary. The academic demands were not as great as in later years. There were no tests. The students were primarily graded on the basis of their papers. They were also graded on their oral presentations. The Pastoral Theology sometimes suffered. Perhaps the need for P.T. courses was not nearly as great then as it is now. The changes in society and congregations certainly ^{have} made more demands on this department in recent years.

In his seminary training, he and his fellow students were faced with the difficulty of bringing the poor performance of one of the professors to the attention of the president. The seminary students formed a committee to talk to President Reim about the upcoming retirement of one of the professors. Sadly enough, the professor's health had deteriorated to the point when he no longer was capable of recognizing whether he was still contributing to the education of the students or hindering their progress. The difficult task of calling this to the attention of the faculty fell upon the students. That's not a fair demand on any student's conscience in any age.

During his course of instruction, Gerlach parted ways with his class from Northwestern. When others went out vicaring, Gerlach stayed at the Seminary to continue his education. He could have vicared with his classmates, but it didn't seem fair to Lil. He had already asked Lil Bode to wait seven years for

him. It did not seem right to ask her to wait one more year. They got married upon his graduation from the Seminary.

Part 2

Early Parish Experience

1953-1970

Grace Lutheran Church, Tucson, Arizona, 1953-1955

From Mequon, Mr. and Mrs. Gerlach went off to Tucson, Arizona. Gerlach served there for two years at Grace Lutheran Church as an assistant for Pastor Erdman Arnold Sitz. Serving Grace in Tucson was an interesting experience, especially in the winter months when the snow birds settled in.

Serving under Sitz was an eye-opener for Gerlach. Sitz had sympathies for the Protes'tant Conference. That was only natural since he was J. P. Koehler's son-in-law. Along with those sympathies his practice of fellowship suffered. He didn't always draw a very clear line with whom he was willing to fellowship. Sitz got better at marking and avoiding when he was elected to be district president.

Gerlach and Sitz clashed in several different ways. But those were still very good years for Gerlach. He learned a lot about what it takes to be a good pastor from Sitz. He was exposed to the ministry. Sitz was an object lesson in many different ways. Sitz taught Gerlach from example that a house-going pastor makes for a church-going people. By visiting the parishioners, Gerlach was exposed to even more aspects of ministry.

While Sitz's ministry gave an object lesson as a pastor on fire for his Lord and in service of the Lord's flock, he probably did so to the expense of his family. He let his wife raise the children. While Gerlach hoped to do better from Sitz's example, he's not altogether confident he has. That's simply an area of a pastor's life that needs persistent attention.

**St. Paul's and Grace Churches,
Douglas and Warren Arizona 1955-1963**

After two years at Grace in Tucson, Arizona, Gerlach took the call to St. Paul's in Douglas and Grace in Warren, Arizona. These parishes were on the Arizona-Mexico border. Sixty-five percent of the surrounding community was Hispanic, one hundred percent of that was Catholic. Outreach possibilities were limited, although attempts were made to reach out and a few pilot services were held in a neighboring town. There is more to be said about Gerlach's service at this dual parish. For now, let's just say this is where Gerlach put into practice what he learned from Sitz.

**King of Kings Lutheran Church,
Garden Grove, California 1963-1970**

In 1963, Gerlach accepted the call to serve a mission congregation in Garden Grove, California. He was installed on January 27, 1963, as the first full-time minister.⁶

Gerlach did not have the comfort of walking into an established setting and easing into his pastoral responsibilities. From the outset it was either sink or swim. When the exploratory pastor was serving this mission, there were forty baptized and seventeen communicants. Gerlach would help this small group reach out into the community the Lord sent them to serve.

⁶ Date of installation recorded by Frederick A. Voss in his senior church history paper, "Mining of Souls in California: A Study of the WELS in the California Mission Field." The information is taken from the bottom of the third page into section V of his paper, *Southern California Expands its Mines*. No page numbers recorded on the paper.

The first thing Gerlach did was get out there and ring doorbells. The Lord caused some amazing things to happen. It eventually got to the point that there were so many prospects that Gerlach couldn't deal with them all. This didn't all come from the people he initially contacted.

King of Kings had a nucleus of people with a wonderful mission mind-set. They were people who always had an eye open, constantly looking for someone to invite to church.

Part of that nucleus of members came as result of doctrinal controversy at an ALC congregation half a mile up the street. St. Olaf, originally an ELC mission, was only eight years old when it had grown to be a sizeable congregation. The first pastor that had served the congregation during these growing years took a call away. He was followed by a pastor who led the people into a *glossalalia* controversy. At first the members who opposed this tried to work with synod officials to discipline their new pastor. They eventually learned how difficult that could be. The synodical officials would not support them in their opposition to the charismatic practices of their pastor. A split soon followed as often does when congregations delve into speaking in tongues. Some of those who left St. Olaf, found their way to King of Kings.

Gerlach got a phone call from one of the former St. Olaf members. He wanted to visit with Gerlach. Eventually King of Kings ended up accepting into membership nearly half of the old St. Olaf church council and their families. These people brought much of the outreach spirit to King of Kings. They were

take-charge people who wanted to move ahead and take part in outreach. They had a love for the truth as was evidenced by the stand they took in the glossalalia controversy. Their love for the truth and their sad experience at St. Olaf could easily have caused them to seek out King of Kings as a place to hide and keep the truth safe from corruption. The Lord healed their wounds and renewed their courage through his mighty means of grace. They continued to serve the Lord at King of Kings with a zeal for outreach.

The Lord blessed the efforts of King of Kings under the leadership of Gerlach. Before Gerlach arrived in Garden Grove, the congregation had seventeen communicants and forty baptized souls. The next year there were one hundred forty-two baptized souls and eighty-one communicants. The chart below helps track the growth of the congregation during the years Gerlach served there.

Year	Baptized	Commun.	Voting
1963	142	81	22
1964	224	141	41
1965	396	236	58
1966	521	287	66
1967	552	359	75
1968	625	398	75
1969	704	401	89
1970	no new report submitted ⁷		

Gerlach did the best he could to enter the open doors that the Lord placed before him. He practiced what he learned from Sitz in Tucson. Get out there and ring doorbells. That

⁷ Information obtained from the *Statistical Report of the Wisconsin Synod*, 1963 p 4, 1964 p 4, 1965 p 4, 1966 p 4, 1967 p 4, 1968 p 4, 1969 p 4, 1970 p 6.

seems so obvious and so basic. Yet, from his later experience as a mission counselor, he realizes that something so obvious and so basic was either not being taught or was just being ignored. During his years in Garden Grove, Gerlach set an individual pace that would be challenging to follow in any situation. He made an average of six hundred evangelism calls a year.

The Lord gave Gerlach a few challenges at Garden Grove that helped him grow in the way he nurtured his flock. The advice is often given that pastors need to guard the office they serve in so that people can respect pastors. Often this is put into practice by having no social contact with parishioners. Yet the pastor can not be such a stand off that the people feel he is not part of the congregation. Usually pastors are advised to limit their socializing with colleagues. Gerlach didn't have too many colleagues in California to begin with. They certainly weren't near by. Gerlach struggled with how he would maintain the people's respect for his position without becoming a loner. He was forced to make a balance. The outcome was that he found it possible to go fishing, camping, and do other social activities with his members without destroying the respect that they had for him as their pastor. Often he improved the impression that people had for the clergy just by his actions. This experience helped shape his understanding of how a pastor can serve his people.

Gerlach also learned a few things about the psychology of education while at King of Kings. In 1965, the church opened a Christian Day school. Occasionally Gerlach would be in the back

of the classrooms observing the way the teachers taught their students. At one point, he saw a remarkable contrast in two methods of teaching. Both teachers taught the same material, but in a different manner. One teacher taught for an affective and cognitive outcome. The other teacher seemed to aim primarily for cognitive goals.

It was then that Gerlach was struck by the difference between cognitive and affective. He began to think of teaching more in terms of modeling. The Christian teacher teaches not only by dispensing facts but by modeling Christ. How does one do that?

He saw the ^{of} effect that two different teachers with two different approaches had on their students. The contrast was remarkable. The students from the one classroom usually wanted to have nothing to do with their teacher outside the classroom. He saw this happen after church services as the students tried to avoid that teacher. At the same time, the students of the teacher who aimed for more affective goals had a loyal following. The students usually flocked around her after church like chicks around a mother hen.

Gerlach remembers King of Kings with a great deal of joy. There were times when he would go home at night and express disbelief at how the Lord was blessing King of Kings. At times the list of prospects grew so fast, he could not begin to nurture the souls on the list. The congregation was at a critical stage of growth just when he received the call to teach at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. The school had grown to the point where it

could use another full-time teacher if it was to grow any more. At the same-time the demands of the congregation necessitated calling another pastor. Unfortunately, the congregation couldn't afford to do both. Which would get done while the other was left undone?

Part 3

Professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

1971-1981

Getting Started

Once Gerlach took the call to the Seminary, his initial reasons for wanting to return the call weren't forgotten. The Lord didn't immediately remove his feelings of inadequacy. He struggled from the start. Wanting to hone his Greek and Hebrew skills before he began teaching dogmatics, Gerlach asked Lawrenz about pursuing some further education as a refresher course. Lawrenz suggested that Gerlach could resurrect his Greek and Hebrew skills without pursuing outside assistance. He advised him to set up his own review.

From February of 1971 through September, Gerlach was free from any classroom teaching responsibilities. That allowed time for a self-taught review of Greek and Hebrew. This free time also allowed him to attend dogmatics classes being taught by Gawrisch, Vogel, and Becker. Gerlach wanted to get a feel for the subject matter and the way his colleagues were teaching the material. He probably got even more than he bargained for in the process.

Being in Gawrisch's class, Gerlach couldn't help but notice the encyclopedic knowledge that the man possessed. He seemed to know Catholic doctrine better than the priests at Marquette. He certainly knew how the WELS had handled doctrinal controversies in the past as if he had lived through it himself. If he didn't know the answer to a question, he knew where to look. The ease with which he used Greek and Hebrew in demonstrating the exegetical basis for doctrine was also apparent. Gawrisch could fill the chalk board with his exegesis of certain key passages.

If there was some obscure point of Greek syntax, Gawrisch knew it and how to demonstrate it. Gawrisch was impressive as a dogmatician both for his wealth of information and his authoritative style.¹ Did Gerlach feel pressure, even just a little at times, to be like Gawrisch?

Attending Vogel's classes was like stepping back into J.P. Meyer's classes. Some good and some not so good. There was nothing flashy about Vogel's teaching style in the classroom. He was predictable in style right down to the same suit he wore every day. When the bell rang for the class to start, he began to read down his page of notes. If he looked at the students twenty percent of the time to gauge their comprehension, that was the maximum. But he nevertheless had totally mastered the content of Meyer's dogmatics outline. He knew dogmatics. He was the master. Did Gerlach feel like the student in Vogel's presence?

And then there was Becker. He was a war hero. He had fought the battle with Missouri from within. When it became apparent that he wasn't getting anywhere with his synod, he left. Becker, too, brought a mastery of the dogmatics material into the classroom. He didn't read down the page like Vogel. His classes were usually more free-wheeling. He didn't follow the outline too closely and interjected stories freely. He had a method of teaching many considered to be spell-binding.

Gerlach attended all of these classes taught by Becker, Gawrisch, and Vogel because he would be teaching with these men.

¹ Braun, Mark E., personal interview, April 21, 1995.

He wanted to know how they tried to cover their material. He wanted to get ideas on how he would cover the material in his classes beginning in September. But did he get more than he bargained for? Did he leave those visitations forever feeling as though his classes wouldn't give what Gawrisch gave, or Vogel, or Becker? Did he?

Maybe. That's for someone else to determine someday or never. But if the question is, "Was Joel Gerlach's dogmatics class just like Vogel's or Gawrisch's or Becker's?" the answer is no. Joel Gerlach taught dogmatics the way that fit his style, the way he thought it should be taught.

A Style All His Own

Gerlach had been a student at the feet of J.P. Meyer and was astounded by the knowledge and humility of that man like every single one of students seems to be. He admired his knowledge of the material covered in class. He wished he had the grasp and mastery over the Greek like Meyer possessed. But he didn't. Nor did he want to teach like Meyer taught, reading down the page, occasionally pausing for questions, not always because he wanted to take the time away from lecture. Even with his spirit of humility, Meyer could give the students a feeling of being put down when they asked a question. Every class was taught almost entirely by lecture. Gerlach wanted his course to be the same in content but different in the manner he presented.

He wanted to bring into the course an element of practicality. The leading question that would help him do this every time he prepared for class was simply: How does dogmatics

pertain to what I will be doing as a pastor? Simply put. Not so simply answered. Apparently Gerlach succeeded in this, to a point. One student told him that the thing he appreciated about this approach to dogmatics was how practical it was. Just how did Gerlach go about making every class seem practical for the day in the life of a pastor and his parish?

He began the dogmatics sections by giving the students questions, outlines, and articles. If students ever felt lost in dogmatics because they got lost in the detail, Prof. Gerlach tried to share the big picture. He handed out section outlines that summarized the section on one sheet of paper. Gerlach intended these outlines to help the students see what they would be studying for the next few days. As they inspected doctrines of Scripture down to their most minor points, those outlines would help bring them step back to see the big picture.

Dogmatics classes can easily become like studying Seurat's Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte. If you only study Seurat's famous painting inches away from the canvass, it might not impress you. It could easily confuse your senses. You need to step back ten, twenty, thirty feet to get the full impression intended by Seurat. Studying it point by point is useful in seeing the technique and understanding how the painting is intricately put together by single points of paint. But it must be studied from a distance to appreciate its beauty.

Very often students don't see the big picture offered in dogmatics. They're ^{led} lead into a very detailed study of a doctrine. They also examine each point of doctrine down to the

last -3) -a) (2). But unless they're led to step back and see the doctrine portrayed in the whole context of Scripture, they might not get it. The outlines Gerlach distributed were intended to help the students step back and look at the particular *locus* as a whole.

Gerlach also led his students to go back one step further and look at the doctrine in its surrounding environment of life. He distributed questions to go with the daily reading assignments. He shared clippings from the newspaper and periodicals. He quizzed their understanding of the doctrine point by point and in its broader application. Some of these measures were intended to help him make the course more practical. Some of these measures were intended to make the demands of the course more like that of a post-graduate school. But more on that later.

That's also what he strove for when he handed out paper assignments. Two papers were due every quarter. The students were asked to pick one of four offered topics. These papers averaged out to eight pages. Some students tried to boost the average with their sixty and eighty page projects. These were also welcomed by Gerlach, especially when they were the fruit of trying to show the multiple practical applications of a certain doctrine. With every paper that Gerlach returned, he gave a little bit of himself, a little revelation of his thoughts. He always let the students know what he liked and didn't like in a paragraph or two.

When the senior year rolled around, students were asked to submit the final dog paper. Instead of the whole class writing on four different topics, he gave each student his own topic to work with. Gerlach walked up and down the row with strips of paper in his hands and let the students pick a topic. He didn't want to read thirty papers with the same theme. It would have been hard to do justice in grading them. Because he always wanted to give the students a paragraph of comments for each paper they wrote, he wanted each student to write on a different topic. This final paper was expected to be twenty-five pages in length, although some students happily exceeded the maximum. The papers Gerlach assigned gave evidence of his attempt to make dogmatics more academically challenging as well as more practical.

Another way in which Gerlach intended to make his classes more practical was by inviting the students to participate in discussion. In Gerlach's class, the students were never intended to operate only as receivers catching sound waves from a professing transmitter. They were to be actively involved in discussing practical consequences of seemingly abstract principles of doctrine. He tried to get discussions going between the students. Often he was successful in starting heated discussions that got the guys going back and forth. He didn't let them go too far, though. He would interrupt when the time allotted to a particular subject was exhausted.

Sometimes that left the students feeling frustrated, as though their curiosity ^{had} and been piqued but not satisfied. Some

students even expressed a certain disdain for the method of teaching, claiming it left them feeling as though they were more in the dark than they had been before. At least they felt the discussion may have raised more questions than it answered.²

Perhaps they were uncomfortable because the discussion revealed more gray areas about which Scripture was clear in principle, but the application wasn't always so clear. Even in their expressions of frustration, were they possibly revealing the success of Gerlach's method? He had gotten them to wrestle with a dogmatic point in terms of not only what it is, but how, and why, and when it is. Had he gotten them to answer with more than just "what" but also "so what"? Had he in fact gotten them to view the application of dry dogmatical statements in the real context of the day to day life of a pastor and his parish?

Those who paid attention certainly benefitted. They found the course helpful in mastering dogmatical truths and applying them in practical situations. Were they at times challenged by the questions and left wondering about points of casuistry? Perhaps.

When Gerlach's students entered the ministry and learned the application first-hand of the maxim that theology is a *habitus practicus*, they perhaps realized how practical he had made dogmatics. If the discussions that Gerlach sparked were difficult, life in the parish was no less difficult. That's what they found if they cared to wrestle with the issues in a ^bBiblical fashion.

² Ibid.

What did Gerlach's students learn from him? One of his students expressed that they learned about the dialectic. Gerlach taught them to use this set of questioning, "If not this, then what? If this, then what?"³ No doubt this training of the thought process was accomplished by training the students to be more than just good receivers. In that way, his manner of teaching dogmatics was transitional from what students had in the thirties, forties and fifties to what they get now in dogmatics.⁴

Such a statement almost demands a disclaimer. There was no transition from one type of doctrine to another. There was, however a transition in the way the doctrine was taught. Gerlach asked his students to do a little more than just write his words down on the page as they looked at a few passages and some dog quotes from Quenstedt and Calov. He asked them questions that got them involved in the discussion.

But before he asked any questions of his students, Gerlach asked himself a few questions. One of those questions was, "How is this doctrine being talked about and challenged today?" If he could answer that question for himself, he could get the point of practicality across to his students. The students not only needed to know how various points of doctrine were attacked in Hoenecke's day or in Pieper's day, they needed to know the current trends in theology. Gerlach wanted to help his students understand, recognize and counter the modern errors rearing their

³ Balge always had the impression that Gerlach had the confidence and respect of the students. He asked David Kolander to react to that point. "What was it about his teaching? What did you learn from him?" David Kolander gave the above response. Balge, Richard D., personal interview, April 4, 1995.

⁴ Balge, Richard D., personal interview, April 4, 1995.

heads in theology. Meyer's notes didn't address them. Neither did Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics*. In fact, it's easy to tell that when Pieper wrote *Christian Dogmatics*, he did so pointing out the errors and errorists of his day. Doctrine doesn't change. But the attacks made on doctrine do change.

Gerlach strove to make his students aware of theological trends. He did so by giving them clippings from magazines and newspapers. He also did so just by keeping himself informed through endless reading. His reading helped him inform the students about the "theology of hope" "process theology" and "theology of relevancy."

At times, the very things that Gerlach strove to bring into dogmatics class to make it more practical were the very things that students balked at. Mark Braun thinks that Gerlach made some students feel uncomfortable because his style of teaching deviated from the norm.⁵ Almost every class was being done entirely by lecture. His class was different. His class made some of the students, maybe even all of his students, feel uncomfortable at one time or another. His class demanded participation. His class made the students wrestle with the issues. But if his students felt a little uncomfortable by the questions he posed, they weren't the only ones.

Professor Gerlach sometimes made himself feel a little uncomfortable. That wasn't always apparent to the students. What the students saw and what Gerlach was experiencing inside weren't always identical. Gerlach could have been feeling

⁵ Braun, Mark E., personal interview, April 21, 1995.

uncertain with his contribution to the class as their professor. But throughout that, he conveyed a sense of confidence without so much as a hint of uncertainty. None of the students ever complained that Gerlach was unfit to teach. Even those who were somewhat dismayed about Gerlach's love for the discussion method had to admit he was competent to teach.⁶

Professors tend to overhear students talking about them whether the students always realize it or not. Dean Balge has caught little remarks students make about their professors. He has even heard remarks made about himself. But he never once heard the students speak disparagingly of Gerlach. There may have been a professor at one time or another about whose teaching ability the students had questions. But Gerlach never fell into that category. At least that was never apparent from the talk overheard by professors.⁷

Instead the students were in awe of Gerlach. They were perhaps even intimidated by him. If students had nicknames for Professor Gerlach, they reflected the majesty and dignity with which he carried himself and conducted himself in the classroom. Some of the students called him Fingers.⁸ The meaning of that nickname was obvious to those who saw Gerlach preach and teach. He makes use of his hands to weave the fabric of his discussion with the congregation or classroom. Those hands convey authority, majesty, and certainty. Those hands emphasized the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Balge, Richard D., personal interview, April 4, 1995.

⁸ Tiefel, James P., personal interview, March 25, 1995.

importance of the topic at hand. Those hands, those majestic fingers, function with dignity. That's how students saw Gerlach.

Some of the students called him the Great Gatsby. The Great Gatsby came out in the theaters in the middle of his tenure as a professor. Students thought Gerlach looked like the Great Gatsby. He was very sharp in the way he dressed.⁹ His wardrobe was only part of a greater impression he conveyed. He carried himself with an air of confidence. Sometimes his students even felt a little intimidated by that confidence. To some, he seemed aloof and unapproachable. Those who got beyond the appearance found a warm and receptive friend on the faculty who always strove to improve the relations between students and faculty.¹⁰

If the students at times felt a little intimidated by Gerlach, the faculty was no different. Gerlach had such a tone of confidence when he spoke that he could make the most convinced and certain professor reexamine his own position. This trait showed itself when Gerlach occasionally mispronounced words. Nothing was wrong with his intelligence or scholarship. He occasionally mispronounced a few words. He could do it with such an air of confidence to make the editors of Webster reconsider their listing of pronunciation choices.¹¹

Dean Balge remembers an occasion when Prof. Gerlach was talking about an article he had just read in a magazine called *Present Truth*. Everyone else thought the present in *Present Truth* was pronounced as an adjective (the emphasis placed on the

⁹ Braun, Mark E., personal interview, April 21, 1995.

¹⁰ Tiefel, James P., personal interview, March 25, 1995.

¹¹ Balge, Richard D., personal interview, April 4, 1995.

first syllable of present, with both e's being short). Gerlach pronounced the present of *Present Truth* as a verb, just like one would say "Present Arms." As much as everyone else thought they knew how the title was pronounced, they were willing to reconsider. Gerlach always did everything with the ultimate air of competence. His colleagues at times even felt intimidated because of ^{the} competence Gerlach conveyed. Gerlach had an air of competence because he was competent.¹²

This dignity and sense of majesty didn't hamper his relations with students. It's easy to see the relationship a student has with a professor by watching the two interact outside the classroom. Watch students in the hallway sometime. Look at the way they react as they walk past their professors. Do they try to dodge into a room to avoid confrontation, or hastily look at one of the graduation portraits or the bulletin boards instead of making eye contact. Or do the corners of their mouth lift a little? Does a smile appear and a greeting come forth? Professor Jeske remembers that students always had a greeting for Gerlach. And Gerlach always had a warm greeting for them. The relationship he had with the students was friendly as was obvious from their interaction outside the classroom.¹³

Even if Gerlach conveyed an image of total control and majesty over himself and the subjects he presented, he very often was experiencing doubts and frustrations. The attitude of confidence that he conveyed with every action and every word was sometimes in conflict with his actual feelings about his own

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Jeske, John J., personal interview, April 5, 1995.

performance as a professor. If the students felt as though Gerlach asked questions that sent them into grey territory, they were probably right. But if discussions tended in those directions, he went out on the limb with them. If ever they didn't feel totally satisfied with his conclusions, or the way he settled a discussion, he felt the same way.¹⁴

The students weren't completely oblivious to Gerlach's misgivings. But they didn't always recognize why he wasn't satisfied with a particular day in dogmatics. James Tiefel remembers that Gerlach wasn't always satisfied with the way a class ended. He could sense his frustrations. He also thought that those frustrations were the normal reaction of a novice professor getting exposed to teaching the subject for the first time in a post-graduate school.¹⁵

While his students thought they were getting as much if not more from Gerlach in dogmatics, Professor Gerlach didn't always think so. At times he confessed his frustrations to his brothers on the faculty. Professor Kuske recalls some of the discussions he had with Gerlach. Gerlach would bring up his misgivings about what he could give to his students. "They'll ask a question, and I don't have an answer for it."¹⁶

Gerlach wanted to open up the class for discussion. That presented a danger. There was always the danger that the students would ask the tough questions he couldn't answer. Maybe some of his own lack of secure feelings about his dogmatics

¹⁴ David P. Kuske, personal interview, March 24, 1995.

¹⁵ Tiefel, James P., personal interview, March 25, 1995.

¹⁶ David Kuske, personal interview, March 24, 1995.

instruction came from the fact that he was willing to go out on a limb with his students.¹⁷

Gerlach's lack of comfort with his own teaching in dogmatics could certainly be attributed to his excellence as a homiletician. A homiletician is forever striving to speak concisely and clearly with exactness and precision. It was hard for Gerlach to carry the same precision and exactness into the classroom that he wanted and could carry into the pulpit.

Was Gerlach exact and precise when he wrote his sermons and preached them to congregations? His listeners certainly think so. Did he also want to accomplish the same thing when he answered questions off the cuff and conducted class through lecture and discussion? If so, was that expecting too much? Clarity and precision is necessary. Do we demand the same clarity and precision of a lecture that we demand of a sermon? Is that always possible when trying to answer questions of casuistry?

When Gerlach was a student, it's very likely he was frustrated more than once by the professor who responded to honest questions with the question, "What kind of question is that?"¹⁸ If Gerlach ever experienced that frustration, he certainly tried to avoid giving that experience to his students. He gave honest attempts to answer honest questions as best he could. But when students ask tough questions, it's not always

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ That was the experience of Professor Jeske when he went through the Seminary. It's possible Gerlach had the same experience since they had the same professors. Jeske, John J., personal interview, April 5, 1995.

possible to give satisfactory answers off the cuff. As he gave his students answers, did he strive to do so with the same precision and clarity as if he had heard the question in advance and had carefully written out his answer to the question? If such was the case, he was playing by the same rules he used for sermons. Sermons are to be clear and fluent. Gerlach's sermons certainly were.

Can every class be as well thought out and as carefully planned as a sermon? That's not possible to do in a lecture/discussion format. Yet it seems as though that's what Gerlach strove for in dogmatics.

Sometimes artists can never find much joy or satisfaction in their latest accomplishments because they challenge themselves to do better. What was good, isn't good enough. There is room for improvement. Anyone with such an artistic or creative personality can forever drive himself to improve, never being satisfied with what he did well before. Did Gerlach have some of that intensity in his personality? Did he forever feel as though he hadn't yet done enough for his students? How well would that wear while teaching a subject like dogmatics where the reading material available is as limitless as the heresies that contradict Scripture.

Maybe it was that intense drive for constant improvement that never let Gerlach grow complacent or self-satisfied with his teaching. He always thought he should be reading more often. Sometimes he felt guilty that he wasn't reading more. But one could forever read books written on dogmatics and never come to

the end. Dogmatics is an endless pit. There is endless reading material available. Gerlach wasn't satisfied.¹⁹

His students certainly seemed to be satisfied with him. Perhaps not every student. Braun remembers a few who would rather do things other than dogmatics while Gerlach was teaching. Some used their hour in Gerlach's dogmatics class to attend to more pressing questions. Which basketball team would play which basketball team on what date? What time would that game be played?²⁰

But the rest who wanted to use their time in class for learning got as much if not more from Gerlach as they did from their other dogmatics professors. Gerlach was always very interesting. He could sit on the corner of the front desk and weave a lecture together with a full set of discussion. He was always very practical. Always very thought provoking. The students liked him very much.²¹

No matter how hard Gerlach might kick himself for his failures in teaching dogmatics, he accomplished great things. Jeske especially credits Gerlach with the ability to explain dogmatical abstractions in concrete terms.²²

Gerlach also helped his students understand the practicality of dogmatics. With that practicality he injected a little reality. It won't always be easy to answer the questions that people throw in your lap. Through his classroom methodology,

¹⁹ Kuske, David P., personal interview, March 24, 1995.

²⁰ Braun, Mark E., personal interview, April 21, 1995.

²¹ This was the consensus of all those interviewed for this paper. The perspective of his former students, Tiefel and Braun, was especially helpful in gaining this impression.

²² Jeske, John J., personal interview, April 5, 1995.

Gerlach was teaching his students how to react when difficult questions were thrown at them. Go to the Scriptures. Find out what the Scriptures say. Apply the pertinent principles to the case at hand.²³

That's easy to outline and difficult to practice. *Habitus practicus* is the first thing students learn about dogmatics at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. While it may be the first thing they learn as students, as pastors it will remain something they will continually struggle with in practice. Gerlach didn't wait for his students to get their first counseling case before he let them agonize with that struggle. He used the classroom to initiate the process.

A fair amount of ink has already been spilled and we've hardly mentioned the fact that Gerlach always was most comfortable teaching homiletics. Homiletics was his strong point. Perhaps that is obvious from the fact that he co-authored *Preach the Gospel* with Professor Balge.

Gerlach and Balge didn't just decide one day that they wanted to write a book. The Homiletics department decided that such a book needed to be written. At the time, Balge, Gawrisch, Gerlach, Habeck, Hoenecke, and Jeske made up the homiletics department. Balge, Gawrisch, and Jeske concentrated on senior homiletics. Gerlach, Habeck and Hoenecke taught junior and middler homiletics.

When the homiletics department proposed that such a book should be written, Gerlach cast his vote for Jeske to write it.

²³ Braun, Mark E., personal interview, April 21, 1995.

But no single author would write the book; the department voted for co-authorship. The precedent had been set by Habeck and Schuetze co-authoring *Shepherd Under Christ*. The precedent was followed. The co-authorship was also decided upon because the department wanted one of the authors to cover the material pertaining most to junior and middler homiletics. The other author would supply information used more in senior homiletics. Ultimately the vote was cast and Balge and Gerlach were selected for the task.

The chapters in *Preach the Gospel* were broken down corresponding mostly with the material each man concentrated on with his particular level of homiletics. Since a lot more philosophy and how-to-do's are taught in the junior and middler year, Gerlach ended up writing the majority of the chapters. Gerlach wrote chapters one, three through five, seven, nine and eleven. Balge wrote two, six, eight, ten and twelve. Each man wrote on his area of teaching concentration.

Both Balge and Gerlach submitted their chapters to the department. Then they revised them according to the criticism offered by the other members of the department. After this, the manuscript was distributed to the department for one last round of criticism before revising for print. In that way the homiletics department was able to endorse the final product as their unified endeavor.

In addition to the constructive criticism offered by his colleagues in the homiletics department, Gerlach sent his chapters to Professor Kiessling at Northwestern. Gerlach had

always enjoyed Professor Kiessling. He was a challenging professor in class. He also enjoyed the spirit in which the man taught. At Gerlach's request, Kiessling offered some criticism on style. Kiessling helped him improve his style of writing. Even in this simple request can be seen one of Gerlach's strengths. He was never self-satisfied. He never thought he could rest on his laurels.

Preach the Gospel was published by Northwestern Publishing House in 1982. Since the textbook was published, it has become a regularly used textbook at the Seminary. For anyone who wants to know some of what Gerlach contributed in homiletics, *Preach the Gospel* and *The Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* are good sources.

If Gerlach was always striving for excellence in dogmatics, it was no less true in his teaching of homiletics. He demanded excellence and pushed the students to always strive for a better sermon. That didn't begin the moment Gerlach took his place on the faculty at the Seminary. That began already with himself when he was a pastor in the parish.

Never satisfied with his preaching, Gerlach always strove to improve. Only a few years out of the Seminary, Gerlach wanted to be a better preacher. But how does a pastor all alone on the Arizona-Mexico border improve his preaching skills. There weren't any preaching workshops being conducted in the vicinity of Douglas or Warren, Arizona. The Seminary didn't offer a summer quarter in 1956. What gatherings the WELS pastors had didn't include preaching clinics where pastors critiqued one another's sermons. Gerlach did what he could.

He enjoyed listening to Peter Eldersfeld on the radio. Peter Eldersfeld was a radio preacher for the "Back to God Hour" sponsored by the Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids Michigan. Sometimes Gerlach would try to outline the sermons that Eldersfeld would preach. He even sent away for the written copies offered to the radio audience. Reading his sermons helped him develop an appreciation for speaking to the people where they were at.

Gerlach's time serving St. Paul's and Grace was a good time for him to concentrate on developing his sermon skills. These were two small congregations with limited possibilities and limited demands. The area was sixty-five percent Hispanic, one hundred percent of which was Catholic. Outreach opportunities were limited. Attempts were made to canvass a nearby community. A few pilot services were held in Sierra Vista. But the Mission Board did not opt to establish a mission there at that time. Gerlach still had some time to spend on developing his sermon skills as well as maturing into his relatively new responsibilities as pastor.

That was a good time to work on improving his sermon writing and delivery. With every sermon, Gerlach was striving to be practical. He wanted to be practical in the sense that people could get a handle on what he was saying. Each sermon was aimed just a couple inches above the heads of the people. He wanted them to grasp what he was saying, while letting them stretch a little for other points and grow in the process.

He always saw the need for structure in the sermon. This structure need not be totally obvious. The structure, as Gerlach puts it, should be apparent but not like scaffolding on the outside of a building.

But as any preacher will admit, it's hard to preach the sermon and then serve as your own critic. As any pastor, Gerlach had to rely a lot on the criticism offered by others. That's where Mrs. Gerlach could and did help out. To this day, Gerlach encourages preachers to take the criticism their wives have to offer. It's a valuable resource. A pastor's wife can help her husband greatly improve his preaching by giving him good criticism.

Gerlach also remembers a few visiting worshippers that offered helpful comments. One of the visitors that stands out in his memory was from an ALC congregation in the Twin Cities. The comments of this particular visitor stuck with him. Maybe more so because of his ALC background. He appreciated Gerlach's sermons. He encouraged Gerlach to keep up the biblically based, expository sermons.

There was another ALC visitor who encouraged Gerlach along similar lines. He was a science professor from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. This professor was in Arizona doing some research nearby. He had some friends who were members of Grace Lutheran in Warren. This visiting professor came to several of the services at Grace. He often told Gerlach that he really appreciated his sermons. He gave the compliment explaining that they didn't hear sermons like that in the ALC. This professor

was referring to the expository nature of Gerlach's sermons. Expository sermons, sermons that expound on the sermon text, were few and far between in the ALC at that time. It's perhaps worth mentioning an additional comment that this professor gave to Gerlach, "Almost thou persuadest me to become a WELS Lutheran."

These were some of the experiences that Gerlach brought with him to the Seminary. As any one of his students and colleagues would readily admit, the years that Gerlach spent in the parish trying to improve his preaching were not spent in vain.

When Gerlach arrived at the Seminary in 1971, the method for teaching homiletics hadn't changed much since his student days. In fact, one of his homiletics professors, Professor Hoenecke was still on the faculty. So the homiletics system Gerlach used as a professor was the same one he used as a student. When he got his feet planted firmly on the ground, he introduced a few necessary changes.

He thought that the practice of starting the sermon writing process three months before preaching a sermon was unrealistic. Gerlach introduced a change in the middler course. He began handing out sermon texts to middleers two weeks before they were to be preached. The students would then study the text, hand in text study, expanded outline, and rough draft. This process would help the sermon to be fresher and easier to memorize. Left to the three month method, he thought the sermons often suffered because the students spent too much time on their sermons. Besides which, he wanted the student effort to reflect the work

they would be forced to do in the parish. That was part of his practical approach to teaching.

He started off a little easier with the juniors. In junior homiletics, he began by asking the students to think about a good sermon that they heard recently. He asked them to detail what made the sermon good. If they heard a bad sermon, he asked them to recount the bad aspects of the sermon. He wanted his students to know the difference and how sermons got to be good or bad.

Mark Braun recalls that Gerlach would be very critical of any bad preaching that he had heard. It got to the point where students would almost be afraid to preach for him in class. Yet, when it came to critiquing the student's efforts, he wasn't nearly as harsh. He was very positive and encouraging.²⁴

Gerlach also tried to set the juniors at ease in other ways. Before the juniors preached their first sermon in class, he made all of them work in the pulpit for five minutes. Without having prepared anything, he asked them to share an experience with their classmates, an illustration if you will. This exercise helped the juniors to preach more freely. It helped them understand what they needed to strive for as they wrote their manuscripts and memorized their manuscripts.²⁵

Those were some of the changes Gerlach introduced early on. Otherwise his teaching was fairly orthodox.

Perhaps the greatest benefit Gerlach gave his students in homiletics was outside the classroom. Gerlach lived up to everything he advocated in the classroom. His own sermons let

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

the students see first-hand what it meant to preach an expository sermon in a practical way.

He showed his students how they could strive to communicate a memorized manuscript without it coming off in a stilted fashion.

He showed his students how to aim parts of the sermon just a couple of inches over the heads of the congregation.

He showed how structure must be evident, but not so shocking and stilted as scaffolding on the outside of a building.

Gerlach taught his students by walking the walk, instructing by example, instructing by living what he taught in the classroom.

Did his students appreciate this at the time? Did they take for granted the gifted servant that Lord had placed at his and their service? Those are questions that can't be categorically answered. Individually, some of his students credit him with amazing results. As Mark Braun expressed himself, "Whatever good I have as a preacher, I owe to him."²⁶

Gerlach taught his students a great deal. We can't possibly catalogue every element they ever learned from him. Much of the basics that he wanted them to know either appeared in *Preach the Gospel* or in *The Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*.

Strive for seven word themes.

²⁶ Ibid.

Make the opening sentence interesting and inviting. Hook the listeners. Invite them to come into your conversation with them and hear more.

Gerlach aimed to make his students individual homileticians, always striving for better communication.

He combined the correct homiletical style with being yourself and being innovative.

He taught all the classic rules of homiletics, yet he encouraged variation.

Gerlach taught his students not to distract their listeners with wild illustrations or inappropriate language. Yet he wasn't afraid to startle occasionally. The sermon that he preached for the Seminary's opening service on September 11, 1973 may have startled a few people. In a way that only Gerlach could pull off, he was able to introduce his sermon by mentioning an old tradition at the Seminary called *Gemuetlicher Abend*.²⁷

Gerlach may have startled the worshippers a little that morning with his sermon title, "A Seminarian's Ongoing Initiation." But he did it only to the point where they were willing to pay a little closer attention. He grabbed their attention from the outset and had it to the very end. He no doubt mentioned G.A. because it was also on the minds of every student there that day. That was Gerlach's gift of being able to discover his listeners' fears and foibles and address them where they were at. Take a look at "A Seminarian's Ongoing

²⁷ Tiefel, James P., personal interview, March 25, 1995.

Initiation" for an example of a Gerlach sermon that does just that.²⁸

Lasting Impressions

Perhaps we can add a little more detail to the portrait by including some of Gerlach's impressions of those he served with as well as a few more impressions given by those who served with him.

Contributions Outside the Classroom

Gerlach contributed to the Seminary beyond his classroom responsibilities. As was mentioned, he co-authored a homiletics text with Professor Balge. He and Becker pushed for another book to be written by the Seminary faculty in the dogmatics department. Gerlach and Becker were striving for a text that would serve to spark discussion. They envisioned a text that would give the substance of Meyer's dogmatics outlines with references to contemporary challenges to Scripture. Such a text could be studied by the students before class in preparation for more of a discussion oriented dogmatics class. When Gerlach took the call to be Mission Counselor, this proposed task was dropped as were several other proposed improvements. But his strong insistence for the project to be taken on remains a healthy reminder for the still present need.

One improvement that Gerlach always pushed for while on the faculty was the improvement of the library. He remembered the library being woefully inadequate during his years as a student.

²⁸ "A Seminary's Ongoing Initiation" has been photocopied from volume 70 of *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* and placed in Appendix 4 of this paper.

While he was a student, the library was still housed in the top level of the academic wing. The 1968 addition of the library wing improved its facilities and offered room for considerable expansion of the Seminary's collection. Gerlach pushed for such expansion to improve the students' access to scholarly material. Gerlach wasn't alone.

The entire faculty made it public record that they were striving to beef up the library's collections. This came out in *A Self-Study of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary*, May 1978. Gerlach chaired the Facilities and Their Use Committee.²⁹ That committee had the responsibility to study the use of the library and possibilities for improvement.

To help appreciate the need for improving the library, it's useful to compare the library's present collection of volumes to what it was several years ago. The Seminary library has a collection numbering "over 41,000 volumes at present."³⁰ Two years before Gerlach entered the Seminary, the Seminary had 9,603 volumes.³¹ Five years after he left the Seminary it had grown by 3,492 volumes to 13,059 volumes.³²

In 1968, the Missio Dei offerings made possible the completion of the present library wing at the Seminary. This addition was designed to accommodate 75,000 volumes.³³ In 1968 the Seminary only had 15,576 volumes. By 1978, the collection had grown to 27,667 volumes. In addition to the books that were

²⁹ Second page of the preface to the 1978 *Self Study of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary*.

³⁰ 1995-1996 *Catalog of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary*, p 6.

³¹ 1978 *Self-Study of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary*, p 63.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ 1995-96 *Catalog of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary*, p 6.

added to the library during Gerlach's tenure, an essay file was added to the library. That essay file contained 301 essays by 1978.³⁴

Gerlach's position as chairman of this committee was not necessarily indicative of his push to improve the library. But let's just say that it fit him well. The students could tell that Gerlach wanted to improve the Seminary and move it closer to making graduate school demands of its students while also providing graduate school resources. This was apparent in his classroom expectations.³⁵

This was also apparent in Gerlach's interest that the Seminary's facilities be improved. The committee he chaired for the 1978 self-study of the Seminary included the following in its report:

At present no data are available to provide a basis for evaluating our collection as to the number of works in a given subject area which are primary, secondary, collateral, or minor in character. We recommend that the various departments evaluate that portion of the collection with which they are concerned from this aspect, especially with a view toward developing the collection's effectiveness in serving the graduate program.³⁶

One last concern that students remember Gerlach for was his interest in improving relations between students and faculty. In that quest, he led by example. Some of his attempts to improve relations with the students were conscious acts. Others just happened without him realizing it.

It has already been stated that Gerlach's presence conveyed an air of dignity and majesty. Sometimes so much so that the

³⁴ 1978 *Self-Study of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary*, p 63.

³⁵ Tiefel, James P., personal interview, March 25, 1995.

³⁶ 1978 *Self-Study of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary*, p 64.

students were a little intimidated. But this was no design to keep students from getting too close. He was a very considerate, warm, unselfish servant. He put others first. If he disagreed with you on a point, he wasn't quick with a put-down. He could disagree and would show it in the most considerate way. Gerlach didn't wait for people to come to him, he reached out to people. That character trait was useful in building a better relationship between the faculty and students. That was a characteristic worth seeing in action and worth imitating.³⁷

In addition to the above-mentioned contributions, Gerlach also contributed his fair share of written material. All the professors were expected to contribute in some way to the Seminary's official magazine, the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*. He gave regular contributions to the "News and Comments" column as well as the "Reviewer's Desk." He also had several major articles printed in the *Quarterly*.³⁸

Contributions to the Synod

Gerlach's contributions to the WELS on a district and synodical level didn't begin with his tour of duty at the Seminary. But we'll restrict our perusal of his extracurricular duties to his Seminary years just to gain a better impression of Gerlach's workload. One of Gerlach's personal recollections of his student days at the Seminary pertains to the work load of the professors. Those were the days when the controversy between Wisconsin and Missouri was reaching a boiling point. Gerlach remembers how busy the professors were moderating one synodical

³⁷ Jeske, John J., personal interview, April 5, 1995.

³⁸ See appendix 4.

meeting after another. He still wonders how they could do all that and still prepare for their lectures effectively.

The load of work may have been lightened by the greater number of professors in the seventies. But it was still pressing. This extra load didn't fall on the faculty in an equal manner. It often depended on how well the professors could say no. To this day, Gerlach would encourage a new professor to learn how to say no. Demands are forever being made of seminary professors. The professors are torn as to how they can best serve the Lord as they serve at the seminary. They serve the synod by teaching the next generation of pastors. At the same time they are often called upon to serve the pastors in the field by delivering papers and contributing through numerous committees.

Like any other professor, Gerlach was called upon to preach for special services and give special presentations. He taught for several pastors' institutes and summer quarters.³⁹ For a while, he even helped Professor Becker fill a vacancy in Cedarburg. The list of extra-curricular activities that Gerlach performed may not be endless, but it certainly is lengthy.⁴⁰ Gerlach kept busy.

Much of what Gerlach contributed to the synod through his extra-curricular activities went unnoticed by most and may soon be all but forgotten. But he will not be forgotten for serving

³⁹ See appendices 1,2.

⁴⁰ Such a list actually exists. The Seminary's Board of Control requests the professors to keep a list of extracurricular activities. This helps them keep touch with each professor's workload and make sure that their extracurricular demands don't become too burdensome.

as a contributing editor to the *Northwestern Lutheran*. This is an area in which he began to serve while a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. The service continues to this day.

Gerlach contributed a lengthy list of articles and editorials to the *Northwestern Lutheran*. While still fairly new at his Seminary responsibilities, Gerlach began to contribute to the *Northwestern Lutheran* column, "Looking at the Religious World." Gerlach's gift for speaking to contemporary events with a note of authority made him a natural for this column.⁴¹

After his years of teaching at the Seminary, Gerlach's contributions took on a different format. His contribution to the "Looking at the Religious World" column ended in 1982. He began to contribute articles that gave commentary on current events with practical scriptural application. A perusal of those articles reveals Gerlach's insight into issues and events that were on people's minds at the times.⁴²

Gerlach readily pointed out the errors and dangerous trends of major denominations. But he also pointed out the positive. On more than one occasion Gerlach showed his appreciation for the contribution of other Christian denominations. Sometimes these words of appreciation were wedded with a conclusion that suggested the denominations praised in the forepart of the

⁴¹ See Appendix 3. A list of years and page numbers is given for Gerlach's contribution to "Looking at the Religious World."

⁴² See Appendix 3 for a listing of titles and summaries. Summaries especially given for those titles that needed a little more explanation.

article could have done better. The 1989 "Masons draw fire from churches" article is a fair example.⁴³

While Gerlach's articles often announced the dangerous trends in other denominations, he also contributed introspective material. "Time in -- time out" from 1985, "Thanks, Mr. Mather, we needed that" from 1986, and "As others see us" from 1984 are articles worth looking at to see Gerlach's pen in action when it turned to matters within the WELS.⁴⁴

The articles that most represent Gerlach's homiletical ability to use touching illustrations are "Love Finds A Way" from 1984, and "Reflections on Baby Fae" from 1985."⁴⁵

Essays delivered by Gerlach and articles from the *Northwestern Lutheran, Lutheran Educator*,⁴⁶ and *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* give us tangible evidence of what Gerlach gave while at the Seminary. But much of Gerlach's contributions to the Seminary are intangible. Such things as attitude and personality bring things to a student body and faculty that can't be documented very well. But the response of his colleagues and students might give an opportunity to grasp the intangible.

Gerlach brought to the faculty some of what Valleskey brought to the faculty. Not that these men are alike in every regard. They certainly are two totally different personalities. But they both brought their California, home mission perspective.

⁴³ See Appendix 3 for summary of "Masons draw fire from churches."

⁴⁴ See Appendix 3 for summary of these articles.

⁴⁵ *The Northwestern Lutheran*, p 4, 1984 and p 48, 1985. See Appendix 3 for photocopies of these articles.

⁴⁶ Gerlach contributed to the *Lutheran Educator* as Department Editor in Editorials from 1967 through 1977.

Gerlach respected administration and the need for good organization in order to carry on the work the Lord has given to his disciples. He was aggressive in whatever project he took on. He was outreach minded. He was always open to whatever opportunities would present themselves. He was always looking for chances to improve. That's what he brought to the faculty. That's what a lot of the students caught from him.⁴⁷

His practical approach to every subject often coincided with his desire to know if what we did yesterday could be done better today. He always exercised a critical faculty of himself, the Seminary and the Synod. He was critical. He was never self-satisfied. He didn't want himself or his colleagues to become smug or conservative just for the sake of being conservative. Yet he went about looking for ways to improve the training of Seminary students in a way that wasn't offensive. Change is always unsettling and can make the most secure individual feel uncomfortable. If the advocate of change goes about it in an obtrusive or obstreperous manner, he is bound to find resistance regardless of his cause for change. Those are some characteristics that Gerlach did not embody.⁴⁸

One of the gifts that Gerlach brought with him to the faculty and the Seminary in general was his ability to explain dogmatic abstractions in concrete terms. He took abstractions and made them concrete. He was also on top of current theological trends and developments. He knew what to read and

⁴⁷ Balge, Richard D., personal interview, April 4, 1995.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

kept current. He spoke with authority when he spoke about the world of theology.⁴⁹ Gerlach was a gift to the Seminary.

Why take the call?

When Gerlach received the call to be mission counselor in California, it wasn't the first time he had received a call during his Seminary tenure. He had received a call to serve at the student mission in Madison. He also received a call to be president of Wisconsin Lutheran College. He returned those calls. Then he got his third call. Perhaps his colleagues thought he would do the same with that call.

Their assumption was based on more than the two previous calls returned by Gerlach. Their assumption was based on historical precedent. No previous professor had taken a call away from the Seminary. Professors left the seminary either in a pine box or under the cloud of controversy. Since neither was the case with Gerlach, it was expected that he would stay.

Not too many members of the faculty even bothered to talk to him about his call. In the midst of the silence, Gerlach was thinking this time he should take the call. Robert Hochmuth, chairman of the California Mission Board, put pressure on Gerlach to take the call. Gerlach had a lot of respect for him. Hochmuth's advice and the silence of the faculty all played in.

In addition, Gerlach's misgivings about his teaching contribution added to the mix. He never felt any uncertainty about his contribution in homiletics. He was confident about his abilities in that arena. Dogmatics challenged him to the point

⁴⁹ Jeske, John J., personal interview, April 5, 1995.

of frustration. Inadequate is how he described his contribution to that discipline. Gerlach always had the feeling that what he offered the students fell short of what they needed.

All of that made him think the Lord could have someone else more qualified to fill the vacancy if he took the call to be mission counselor. The position of mission counselor was also appealing. The synod was at a point in its history when it was able to expand its home missions. There were funds available to open new home missions. But few parish pastors were willing to take the call from an established congregation to start new missions. As a result, the openings were filled by seminary graduates. Too many assignees, once they were in place, began to flounder.

A mission counselor position was suggested to help these graduates figure out what they were to do and how they could do it. The fact that two thirds of the pastors in missions in California were former students of Gerlach certainly played into the picture. Gerlach thought he could be of help to those young men.

Throughout his years at the Seminary, there was always a desire to get back into the parish. This seemed to be one step closer to the parish. Mission Counselor was a position he could fill more adequately than Dogmatics Professor. At least, that was his reasoning at the time.

What would his colleagues have said to that? President Schuetze was surprised when Gerlach told him that he was seriously considering taking the call. Schuetze hadn't been

president of the Seminary for very long. Now one of his professors was going to take a call out. That can shake a new president and make him wonder about his own capabilities to lead.

Certainly none of his colleagues thought Gerlach should go. In fact they were surprised at his announcement. Those who didn't talk to him about his call beforehand were surprised. Fredrich said this was the first time in the history of the Seminary that a professor took a call away from the Seminary.⁵⁰ Despite their surprise and disappointment, the faculty realized that this was what the Lord led him to do and that it was the right decision. Perhaps his decision would make it easier for professors in the future to take calls away from the Seminary if the need ever arose.

Not only were his colleagues surprised that he took the call, they were surprised at some of the reasons he considered while deliberating. Most of the faculty never knew of his feelings of insecurity until the time he left. That's when they began to hear Gerlach's fear that he was not offering his students enough. But in the ten years that Gerlach served on the faculty, few would have gotten such an impression of him. A few sensed his insecurity. But only those in whom he confided beforehand.⁵¹

Some of those confidants were on the faculty. Gerlach also confided in his students. Occasionally Gerlach made comments, especially toward the end of his years on the hill, that made the students wonder. Gerlach was teaching senior dogmatics when he

⁵⁰ Kuske, David P., personal interview, March 24, 1995.

⁵¹ Jeske, John J., personal interview, April 5, 1995.

indicated his frustration to his students. Mark Braun remembers one particular dogmatics session in which the course of discussion carried into discussing parish ministry in comparison to the ministry as professor at the Seminary. It seemed as though Gerlach had grown tired. It seemed as though Gerlach had come to the mountain and found that the mountain wasn't what it seemed to be from a distance. When he was in the parish ministry, he thought that it would be an honor to be at the Seminary. Now that he was at the Seminary he said, "I would go back into the parish in an instant if I got a call."⁵²

Gerlach's son Bryan always thought his father wanted to get back into the parish. At his installation as California Mission Counselor, Bryan Gerlach brought that up in the sermon. He knew his father always had a desire to return to the parish when the opportunity presented itself. As Mission Counselor, he was one step closer to the parish. Little did Bryan know his words would sound prophetic a few years later when his father took the call to be pastor at Our Redeemer in Santa Barbara, California.

⁵² Braun, Mark E., personal interview, April 21, 1995.

Part 4

Return to the Parish

1981 - Present

Mission Counselor for California Mission Board
1981-1985

As Mission Counselor Gerlach was one step closer to the parish, in more ways than one. He was constantly visiting mission parishes to offer counsel to the young pastors. Two thirds of the pastors in his area of responsibility were former students. That was both an asset and a liability. There was already a relationship established, which was good. He already knew these men that he was to serve as counselor. The trouble was more often than not they ended up perceiving him as the heavy.

Gerlach admits that he made some mistakes in the way he handled this new position. But then no one really knew what to do as a mission counselor. He could not look at the past procedure and go from there. One of the mistakes he made early on was allowing himself to be perceived as the big heavy.

When he first got to California as Mission Counselor, there were some fires that needed to be put out. A congregation in La Habra was under a moratorium. It was given time to accomplish a certain level of improvement. If the mission board's goals weren't achieved, subsidy would be withdrawn. Gerlach spent months with that one congregation trying to help it get going, to no avail. That was very frustrating for him personally. But it also gave the impression that the Mission Counselor is the heavy and not the friend to the pastor.

Toward the end of his experiences as mission counselor, Gerlach was very frustrated. There were no funds to open new missions. A moratorium had been placed on starting any new missions. To Gerlach, he thought he was just costing the synod thousands of dollars while they weren't getting anything in return.

But his frustrations were caused by more than budget constraints. He was frustrated by some of the pastors. There were pastors who didn't do anything once they were assigned to their missions because they weren't trained to be missionaries. Even something as simple as ringing doorbells and making phone calls was a frightening prospect to these new pastors. There were bona fide prospects to work with. They were simply reluctant to make the calls. He remembers that one pastor spent his entire time studying. He preached some good sermons, but he wouldn't get out and make calls on people. All he would do was study. Eventually this pastor resigned.

That's not to say that every pastor in California didn't know how to work in missions. Some of the assigned pastors and veterans picked up the skills they needed for mission work while on the job. There were pastors in California in mission congregations that simply didn't need a mission counselor. But they were very often the ones who were always happy to have Gerlach visit them.

Other pastors desperately needed his help. Either because of wrong signals or their own lack of self confidence, they didn't want Gerlach's counsel. That was very difficult to work

with. It was frustrating for him to work around a defensive mind-set.

Gerlach is happy to have had the experience serving the synod as Mission Counselor. During that time he met a lot of wonderful people. It was a learning experience. When the call came from Our Redeemer in Santa Barbara, he saw a way to save the synod thousands that could be spent better elsewhere, during the time when budget restraints curtailed the opening of new missions. It was also an end to many frustrations. Even so, the decision was not an easy one to make.

Our Redeemer, Santa Barbara, California, 1985-1988

When Gerlach took the call to Santa Barbara, he was convinced that at his age, this was probably the end of the road for him. If ever there was an ideal congregation in which to end up, Our Redeemer was that congregation.

In the middle 1970's, General Motors established a research and development plant in Santa Barbara. They chose that location because it was an area where they could attract skilled workers. A large core of the workers came from the Delco plant in Milwaukee. Altogether, four hundred families came from Milwaukee. About forty to forty-five of those families were Wisconsin Synod. The majority of those WELS transplants went to LCMS congregations because the WELS mission was just getting started in rented facilities.

Twenty families stayed with the Wisconsin Synod. They formed a unique congregation. They were midwest WELS Lutherans.

The congregation was characterized by its solid families, good giving, leadership abilities, diligent workers with no marital problems. Serving this congregation was a real pleasure.

Although, not everything is easy after being away from the parish for fifteen years. Gerlach still can't believe how much he struggled in those first years back into the parish. It took him a long time to prepare his weekly sermons again. He also found it very taxing to memorize his sermons. Gerlach had some unnerving experiences as he trained himself all over again. He had to learn to use his mind in a fashion different from when he was a professor or mission counselor.

Gerlach was quite dissatisfied with his pulpit efforts for a year or more. After that time passed, he began having doubts. Gerlach started to psych himself out. Difficult times. Self-doubts become poison to the mind after time. Eventually he was able to stop being down on himself and to resurrect his preaching skills. Then everything became enjoyable. Our Redeemer was an enjoyable place to serve with a marvelous group of people. It was a small congregation with minimal demands yet plenty to do. In 1988 it began a rather ambitious outreach program.

During his years in Santa Barbara, Gerlach began taking on more and more outside activities. He served on the synod's Board for Stewardship. He served on the planning committee for a seminar to introduce zero based budgeting. He continued to record for "Message from the Master."

His work for the synod often brought him back to Milwaukee. On one occasion he was back at the Seminary to play a role in an

evangelism video that John Barber was producing for the Board for Evangelism. In that video, Gerlach played the role of a pastor counseling with some parishioners. It was the summer of 1988, an extremely hot year. As the taping was ending, Jackie Bauer told Gerlach that they were having a call meeting at St. John's in Wauwatosa that evening. She said to Gerlach, "We're going to call you." She said that half jokingly and Gerlach responded in the same manner. He told her to save the cost of postage and the phone call. "I won't leave Santa Barbara."

By 11:00 pm the taping session had finished. It had been a long exhausting day. Gerlach went to Valleskey's house; that's where he sometimes stayed when he came back to Milwaukee. When he got there, the house was dark. At first he wondered, "Didn't they wait up?" Gerlach went inside and was getting a drink from the kitchen when he saw a note on the table. The note instructed him to first call Wayne Baxmann, the president of St. John's, and then call his wife.

He found out from Baxmann that he had been called to St. John's. Gerlach thought there was no way he would leave the friendly confines of Santa Barbara to serve in a big congregation.

The next day Baxmann came to Professor Valleskey's house to inform Gerlach about his call to St. John's. The whole time he politely listened. But he could not help thinking, "I'm too old for this." After his meeting with Baxmann and Valleskey, Valleskey took Gerlach to the airport. He made a little detour on the way and took him to St. John's. Valleskey took him inside

the church and showed him around. "This is where you will be working."

On the flight back to Santa Barbara, Gerlach wondered how much time had to pass before he declined. He knew he would decline. But he didn't want to seem flippant in the way he treated the call.

Time just dragged on for Gerlach. He couldn't write the letter telling St. John's that he was returning the call. He felt he had to decline, but he just couldn't write the letter. After some time passed, Mrs. Gerlach asked her husband, "Is the fact that you're not able to write this letter the Holy Spirit's way of telling you that you shouldn't decline?" But Gerlach had misgivings about going to a large congregation because he had grown up in one. It would confront him with the difficulties that are often associated with third and fourth generation Lutherans. He didn't want to leave a congregation where people treated each other like family.

St. John's, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, 1988 -

After agonizing over his decision for weeks, Gerlach accepted the call and St. John's congregation rejoiced. Gerlach was installed on November 6, 1988. Professor Jeske preached for the installation service.¹

Gerlach's years at St. John's have been very good for a number of reasons. Some of the large congregation problems that he feared do exist at St. John's. There are fringe members who are difficult to reach. Dealing with delinquents and the

¹ Installation service folder taken from the Seminary archives.

problems that sometimes occur with third and fourth generation members are evident. But overall, it's been a good few years of service.

It's not just the usual big congregation. Gerlach can't think of too many congregations with such good lay leadership. The uniqueness of St. John's is evident at the congregational meetings. The pastors have minimal involvement. "We just sit there and let the leaders lead." Gerlach appreciates the congregations ability to come together, discuss issues, differ sharply, yet in a Christian spirit, resolve the questions and then go on.

The structure of St. John's is excellent. Shortly after Gerlach's installation the congregation called a minister of administration. St. John's utilizes gifts of the people serving. There is an awareness that we need to minimize the administrative time demands of pastors. So committees and boards meet on the same evening. The structure of the congregation is consistent with Acts 6.

The adult education at St. John's is a plus. There is still much to do, but St. John's is off to a good start.² Pastor Gerlach, along with Pastor Wagner and a host of guest speakers conduct an ambitious adult education program at St. John's. In the area of adult education, Pastor Gerlach also contributed on a synodical level with his New Testament course in the Training Christians for Ministry series of Bible studies.³

² The Bible class attendance records kept at St. John's attest to the improvement in attendance over the years.

³ In addition to this New Testament survey, Gerlach also authored *Is This for Me?* for young adult Bible classes.

Another good experience about St. John's is the quality of worship. The quality of the music, the choirs, the organists, the instrumentalists and congregational singing is inspiring. Visitors often comment on how much they appreciate coming to St. John's to worship.

For all the agony he spent deliberating the call to St. John's, serving this congregation continues to be a privilege and a joy for Pastor Gerlach.

Reflections

One of my reasons for taking on this project in the first place was to learn more about the ministry through a respected pastor who has served the Lord faithfully for 42 years in the pastoral ministry. Before I finish this portrait, there are a few finishing touches I would like to add. These final touches are reflections from Pastor Gerlach.

These reflections are a legitimate addition because of the unique perspective that Gerlach can offer. He is the only Seminary professor to take a call away from the Seminary and end up in the parish.* He knows about training pastors from personal experience. He knows about the parish from pre-1970 and post-1985 experience. From his perspective, he gives the following advice.

For the graduates of our Seminary, his advice is simple to remember: concentrate on your preaching. Gerlach offers the advice of the Apology, "There is nothing that so attaches people

* Wane Mueller was the second professor to take a call away from the Seminary. He didn't return to the parish but serves as the administrator for Parish Services.

to the church as good preaching."⁵ "If you get off on the wrong foot with your preaching, your congregation will look at the rest of you through the filter of your preaching."

Gerlach is also confident that the education which each graduating class has received from the Seminary has prepared them well for the ministry. Gerlach is grateful for the gifts the Lord has given to the WELS in its Seminary. The students coming out of the Seminary have a better education than he received as a student. This begins at Northwestern. The guys come to the Seminary with better language skills. Northwestern has been doing a good job; a better job particularly in Greek and Hebrew. The heart of theological education is exegesis. The Seminary still does very well in that area.

The addition of the evangelism chair has certainly been beneficial to the training of mission-minded pastors. It was long overdue.

If there are some negatives, they're not attributable to the Seminary curriculum. They are attributed to the times we live in. Students today are more materialistic. Some students are also negatively affected by the girls they marry. There are a lot of young pastors whose wives are not mature enough to let their husbands do what has to be done as a pastor.

Gerlach sees some improvement over the years that isn't necessarily in correlation with the curriculum. Students seem less parochial than in his day. There was a time when it seemed that the sun rose and set in terms of the WELS. We confess that

⁵ Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article 24, paragraph 50, page 401 in the Triglotta.

we believe in the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of saints. We're getting better at showing that. There was a time when we lived with a Wisconsin Synod ghetto mind-set and closed the world off from ourselves. We acted as if the only church God was interested in was the WELS.

That is not in any way a disregard for the fellowship principles. Fellowship principles do not mean that we have to be uncivil to other Christians, including other clergymen.

WELS pastors need to share their convictions, even with other clergymen of different denominations. If we do have the truth, what's the use in hiding it under a basket? Why be so isolationist?

Cautions against isolation cannot be interpreted as allowing lax practice of fellowship. We need to be all the more firm on our fellowship practices. First that means we need to know what they are. Gerlach is concerned that the fellowship principles are not so well grasped or appreciated by the younger pastors who didn't go through some of the struggles with Missouri. We need to get into the Scriptures like we did when the controversy between Missouri and Wisconsin was raging. That advice holds true for any controversy.

Some final words of advice that Gerlach gives to the young pastors falls in the category of family life. "Don't make the mistake I made, putting church first and family second. Don't neglect your family because of all the demands made by the church."

Gerlach warns about falling into the pit of procrastination. It's so easy to think the situation will be easier next year. The pastor who thinks he will be able to spend more time with his family next year is headed for rough times. Once you get hooked by that type of thinking, you're stuck and your wife gets neglected and your children get neglected too.

At the same time, he's concerned about the wives who don't let their husbands do the work they were called to do. Sometimes in the desire for more attention, wives put guilt trips on their husbands. So much still depends upon the wives young pastors and future pastors marry.

Undoubtedly the one detail that intrigues us the most about Gerlach centers around why he took the call to be mission counselor. We could spend time speculating. That might take us for one last look at Gerlach's own evaluation of himself as a dogmatics professor. Perhaps we could look into a few more details about Gerlach's strong desire to bring the Seminary up to date, to help others see better ways of doing things. Was he at times frustrated by the resistance he encountered? Did he get tired of hearing, "That's the way we've always done it."?

Finally all that speculation isn't necessary; Gerlach took the call away from the Seminary for one reason. He was convinced the Lord wanted him to serve as a mission counselor for the California Mission Board of the Wisconsin Synod. When a brother

determines that his Creator has equipped him for service at another place, you don't second guess him.⁶

But we're still brought back to his decision to the leave the Seminary. It never happened before. Maybe it was about time it did happen. If anyone would be willing to do something that had never been done at the Seminary before, it would be Gerlach.

When a brother finally makes his decision, it's good to stop all questioning of what choice was wiser. But until that final decision is made, it's good and proper to seek advice and for others to give it. Gerlach might have thought in the back of his mind that he could be a better mission counselor than professor. If he wanted to know what the students thought of his teaching, he could have asked them. The student evaluation which is currently in practice helps to do that when it is used. He could have asked them for their input regarding his call. Was that a viable option?

If Gerlach had doubts about the level of excellence that he brought into the classroom, could he have asked for a colleague's assistance in evaluating his teaching? It doesn't seem as though that was a readily accessible option. When several of his colleagues were asked to comment on his teaching ability, they could only comment on what they saw outside the regular curriculum of the seminary. Peer visitation was not a part of the seminary's practice at the time. It's a valuable and welcome addition to the seminary. It helps a professor check the reality of his self-evaluation with that of a peer's evaluation.

⁶ Jeske, John J., personal interview, April 5, 1995.

With all the emphasis that was placed on Gerlach's desire to improve himself and the faculty by looking for better ways to instruct the students, it might seem as though he wore out his welcome toward the end. Were there members of the faculty who were happy Gerlach took the call so he would no longer be pestering them to change this and improve that. Change can make a person uncomfortable, especially if you had been doing it one way since 1933.

Gerlach might have thought at times about whether other faculty saw him as a gadfly. That was one thing he was not in the estimation of his colleagues. The faculty saw Gerlach as a competent, complex individual with the attitude of a servant-messenger. He was always very considerate in the way he dealt with students and his brothers on the faculty.

After he left the Seminary, with no disregard for his successor intended, the faculty missed Joel Gerlach. Not the least of whom was his next-door neighbor who offered these words of reflection after Gerlach's departure.

Our next-door neighbors for the last 10 years have just moved from here to a fringe of the continent. The daily views and the constant suggestions of the empty house are a stern reminder. It is so easy to be heedless time and again about the praying and living implications of the phrase Luther includes in the Fourth Petition list of the good things in temporal life we are to pray for -- good neighbors. Joel and Lillian and their children were such good neighbors.

The good gift of good neighbors is easily overlooked on the hill on which we live because there are so many of them on all the other sides.....The bottom line is not that we *have* good neighbors but that we *be* them. With Luther we will all pray for good neighbors. Such prayer rids us personally of all concerns that the next next-door dwellers might not be good neighbors. Pray with and for us that we be good neighbors to them and also to those at the

continent's fringe who by the Savior's classic definition in the Good Samaritan story are still good neighbors.
Edward Fredrich⁷

Even in his departure, Gerlach contributed to the Seminary. Though the Seminary would no longer have his gifts dispensed in the classroom, pulpit and faculty room, he left lasting contributions.

No longer does a professor need to consider his service at the Seminary as the last stop before entering glory. Gerlach's departure broke the unwritten rule. Perhaps he made it easier for the next man to take a call away from the Seminary. Perhaps Gerlach has loosed the tongues of the faculty so that they can now speak in terms of "if I ever return to the parish" or "when I return to the parish." What positive impacts can that have on future parish pastors to hear their instructors express such desires?

Why would anyone ever want to take a call away from the seminary? That's already been answered in Gerlach. That's not to say that a wholesale turnout of faculty would be advisable. But the advantage of having a pastor with fresh parish perspective isn't to be underestimated. Perhaps that's one of the things that Gerlach has learned since his days at the Seminary.

It's helpful having professors on the faculty with a fresh parish perspective because the ministry has changed. Sin is still sin. We still deal with individuals with law and gospel. That hasn't changed nor have the means to accomplish the work of

⁷ *The Northwestern Lutheran*, August 30, 1981, p 275, Volume 68, 1981.

the ministry. But a lot more of the compounding results of sin get thrown into the pastor's lap than they were in years past.

There is so much more that could be said about Joel Gerlach. There are so many details that should be shaded in to give a little color and dimension to this portrait. If you want to see a more life-like rendition of Gerlach, go hear him preach or listen to him teach. Ask Gerlach about the joy of serving the Lord in the ministry. You could even ask one of his neighbors to share personal glimpses of Gerlach. They would be happy to show you Gerlach from their perspective.

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Appendix 1

Summer Quarter Courses Taught

The following information is taken from Appendix 26 of *A SELF-STUDY OF WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY*, December 1993.

Systematic Theology

1975 ST 470	Christian Ethics	1.5
1977 ST 491	Apologetics in Lutheran Theology	3
1981 ST 453	Neo-Pentecostalism	1.5
1991 ST 495	Charismatic Movement Today	3

Homiletics

1974 PT 462	Preaching Laboratory	1.5
1980 PT 462	Preaching Laboratory (repeat)	1.5

Appendix 2**Pastors Institute Courses Taught**

The following information is taken from Appendix 27 of *A SELF-STUDY OF WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY*, December 1993.

1976 - Autumn Review of Homiletical Theory
1981 - fall The Work of the Holy Spirit, with Special
 Reference to Modern aberrations (*Dropped*)

Appendix 3

Contributions to Northwestern Lutheran

- 1974
"Looking at the Religious World" pp. 43, 106, 122, 215, 320, 373.
- 1975
"Looking at the Religious World" pp. 27, 93, 137, 202, 322, 357.
- 1977
"Looking at the Religious World" pp. 74, 122, 219, 281, 339, 434.
- 1978
"Looking at the Religious World" pp. 56, 141, 152, 186, 268, 357, 419.
- 1980
"Looking at the Religious World" pp. 23, 58, 138, 172, 266, 300, 366, 398.
- 1981
"Looking at the Religious World" pp. 28, 42, 73, 121, 155, 172, 188, 249, 266, 284, 316, 348, 380.
- 1982
"Looking at the Religious World" pp. 12, 41, 74, 109, 172.
"The nuclear arms race -- a moral issue? pp. 168, 169
"To ask whether it is *wise* or not to maintain a nuclear arsenal is an exercise in good citizenship. To ask whether it is *right* or not is an exercise in futility. The Bible does not answer that question."
""Christian" Public Policy: A hotly-contested issue" pp. 232, 233
The article warns against confusing the natural law with the moral law. The moral law was given to the church to be a guide for Christian living as a response to Christ's love. Public policy needs to be argued on basis of natural law. Calvin opted for using the revealed moral law in making public policy. Luther opted for natural law.
"That's the spirit...catch it" p. 283
This article was written about John Bauman who was assigned to do exploratory work in California.

Appendix 3

Contributions to Northwestern Lutheran

1982 continued...

"E.T. For Christmas" pp. 346, 347

Gerlach capitalized upon the rage over the movie E.T. to encourage his readers to think of ways in which they could bring the gospel into their everyday discussions with the unchurched. Because it is a modern day version of folklore or folktale, E.T. works well to set the stage for Christian evangelism.

"E.T. is popular this Christmas. Use his popularity to help someone know the real E.T., the beautiful one, full of grace and truth. As an opening, it's hard to beat E.T."

1983

"The Reader's Digest Condensed Bible -- Is it the Word of God?" pp. 120, 121

"We have no bouquets to offer the editors of the RDCB, and we would not encourage anyone to buy a RDCB when there are other reliable versions on the market. But at the same time, neither would we say that a sinner could not come to know his Savior by reading it. And if one sinner comes to repentance by reading, God's angels will rejoice in heaven over the fact."

"Exploratory missions: A new strategy for home mission expansion" pp. 328, 329

"The Christmas spirit" p. 352

"The spirit of Christmas is the Spirit of Christ in you. The evidence of it is fruit of the Spirit in your life, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.""

1984

"The Day After" p. 7

The public's reaction to the ABC TV documentary drama "The Day After" demonstrated how hopelessly so many Americans are living. "The Day After" brought some people to grips with how hopeless their lives were. It's interesting that this show aired on the last Sunday of the Church Year. The end times is all about pointing people to the wonderful hope they have in Christ.

Appendix 3

Contributions to Northwestern Lutheran

1984

"Love Finds A Way" p. 48

Gerlach used a touching story about a dog that risked its life to get to another dog that was hit on the highway. He also weaves in the caring response of a number of different people who tried to help the injured dog. He used this story as a contemporary parable. "The victim is your neighbor. He's hurting, perishing unless *someone* reaches him in time. You are someone. You have the time....God gives you love for loving your neighbor. And love finds a way. Love always finds a way."

"As others see us" pp 154, 155

"We can't share the gospel with others unless we get a hearing for it. It's hard to get that hearing when we try to tell people about God's love for them today in the language of yesterday."

Article prompted by an encounter with a fallen away Lutheran on a flight.

1985

"Reflections on Baby Fae" p. 48

Everyone knew about Baby Fae, a little five-pound baby girl, who was given a heart transplant from a baboon.

The organ transplant was useful as an analogy to teach the dangers of false doctrine. The ecumenical movement says it's okay to mix theological "tissues" of varying types to enhance the body of Christ. Not so. Rally around the Word and Sacrament. Don't combine truth with error.

"Cults -- why so attractive" pp 88, 89

"If caring about the truth is not balanced with caring about other people, it should come as no surprise if people ignore what we say about the truth."

"Authentic Christianity, intensely practiced, is the best response we can make to the success of the cults."

Appendix 3

Contributions to Northwestern Lutheran

1985 continued...

"Time in -- time out" pp 144, 145

This article addresses the problem called workers often have of working so much that they neglect their own health and their own families. The article presents the problem and the principles involved to address the problem. Part of the relief needed will come when we put our confession of the universal priesthood into greater use.

"Mahalo, members of the WELS" pp 284,285

A short article about Pastor Mc Waters, WELS mission pastor in Hawaii. The people served by Mc Waters were grateful for him. Mahalo is the Hawaiian way to show gratitude. Mahalo, members of the WELS.

"The Macedonian spirit" p. 365

Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Los Angeles, CA, had the Macedonian spirit. After they burned their mortgage, they had surplus offerings. They used the excess funds to assist Pastor Robert Hochmuth, chairman of the California Mission District Board, by funding a vicar.

1986

"Church programs for the community" p. 10

Jesus didn't intend for the church to exist in isolation and to serve itself only. Nor did he intend for it to be an adversary to the existing community. There are ways the church can function as an entity within the community and not be apart from it.

"Thanks, Mr. Mather, we needed that" p. 150

Mather, a LCMS Lutheran, and research assistant for Christian Research Institute says that the WELS should be commended. It takes a firm stand on inspiration and inerrancy. It is determined to resist liberal theology.

But he also says the WELS has "an elitist attitude." Can't totally agree with Mr. Matter, but we must put our confessional principles into action without displaying a spirit of elitism. How? Speak the truth in love. Thanks for the reminder.

Appendix 3

Contributions to Northwestern Lutheran

1986 continued...

"Bible Class was never like this" pp 306, 307

The Pavilion of Promise at Expo '86 in Vancouver gave a high tech presentation of the Gospel message in a way designed for non-Christians. Credit goes to Crossroads Christian Communications for the effort. Unfortunately, after exiting the Pavilion, visitors were given a tract that talked about salvation but only as a limited atonement. Some visitors who were impressed with the display said that Bible Class was never like this. It wasn't meant to be. Bible Class is designed for Christians.

1987

"Pornography and the Meese Commission" pp 8,9

Article offers a commentary on the Meese commission and its reception by the mainstream media and the ACLU. Gerlach concludes with suggestions as to how to get involved in halting the march of pornography.

"A portrait of a wolf in sheep's clothing" pp 150,151

This was written as a reaction to an article in *Thought and Action*, an education journal of the National Education Association. The NEA was upset with the religious dogmatism of the students. One very upset individual was McKenzie. He was upset with students who hold to the absolute truths from the Bible. Yet this same McKenzie claims to be a Christian minister. He is a wolf in sheep's clothing.

"The unholy war" p. 184

The press has been having a field day. Oral Roberts' claimed that God would kill him if he didn't raise eight million dollars. Jim Baker's resigned from the PTL club because of adulterous relations. After all of this, Swaggart and Jerry Falwell fought over who would take over the PTL. Perhaps these recent embarrassments will show the televangelist for who they really are.

Appendix 3

Contributions to Northwestern Lutheran

1987 continued...

"The other side of the condom controversy" p. 245

In spite of all the talk about the physical consequences of "unprotected sex" we need to remember more important consequences. Don't forget that immoral behavior is no less debilitating to a nation than physical consequences.

"A woman's world as *MS.* views it" p. 386

Gerlach offers his reaction to "Shake the Universe" -- an article in the 15th birthday of *MS.*. In that article, Madalein L' Engle tried to describe her idea of the dream world of the future and the role of women in making that world happen.

It was nothing more than what Eve and Adam wanted. Sinful nature has always wanted an undetermined universe where man is measure of all.

1988

"The New Age movement. It can't be ignored" pp 70,73

"The New Age is a term that covers what some refer to as the human potential movement." It goes by many names and several organizations are included: cult-type, health, and political.

The notion of self-help makes the New Age movement so appealing. It is also appealing to our Western Culture. It accepts other religious ideas; it's a form of Hinduism. It has no central authority, no direct revelation, no rigid moral code. It tells the world, "God is all, all is God."

"The New Age view of reality is in conflict with biblical truth at a number of essential points. Those points need to be emphasized. The first is the truth that God is a supreme, transcendent being apart from human beings and from the created world. God is not all and all is not God."

"The counterpart to that is the truth that you and I are creatures of God, separate and distinct from God. We don't enter this world as emanations from God who through a series of reincarnations became more and more divine. We don't merge back into God. We retain our separateness and our identity through all eternity."

"Another truth that needs to be emphasized is the fact that man's basic problem is sin, not ignorance. So our basic need is for forgiveness, not illumination. Man reaches his destiny in communion with God through Christ, not in the ultimate discovery of one's true self. Reincarnation is a myth that conveniently hides the truth that "man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment."

Appendix 3

Contributions to Northwestern Lutheran

1988 continued...

"God's gifted people"

Gerlach recommends Valleskey's Bible Study course, "Gifted to Serve." It's an excellent tool.

"Amending the First Amendment" p. 244

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting free exercise thereof."

The First Amendment as framed by our founding fathers was intended to protect the wholesome effect that religion has on our country by protecting religious bodies from the "tentacles" of the government. In a word the First Amendment promotes separation.

Not everyone is agreed on what separation is. We need to remember the context in which it was written. There are many examples in the courts where the First Amendment is being challenged. Gerlach cites a few related to abortion and homosexuality.

Fourth of July is a good time not only to thank God for the freedoms he has given us to enjoy, it's also a good time to pray for the perpetuation of those freedoms. This timely article appeared in the July edition of *The Northwestern Lutheran*.

"Universal contempt: "The Last Temptation of Christ"" p. 304

The producers of this film strung together a multitude of lies about Christ in order to present the "human side of Christ." When they were attacked for their portrayal of Christ as a lying, pharisaical, womanizing sleeze, they ran to hide behind the First Amendment.

"The issue here is not a question of rights under the First Amendment. Of course Universal has the right to distribute the movie. But to have the right is not a license to exercise the right. The real issue has to do with the protocol of common decency in a religiously pluralistic society."

1989

"Masons draw fire from churches" pp. 111,112

Catholics, Methodist, and Anglicans criticized Masons. Yet their criticism missed the heart of masonic heresy. Masonic teaching denies that Jesus is the world's one and only Savior.

Appendix 3

Contributions to Northwestern Lutheran

1989 continued...

"In the church who shapes what?" p. 328

This article about contemporary preaching in the church draws a comparison between the viewer-driven newscasts and pew-driven pulpits. "Thank God if the preacher in your pulpit on Sunday morning is Spirit-driven rather than hearer-driven."

"Woodstock: a reappraisal" p. 370

Has Woodstock headed us in the wrong direction? There are signs that it has. Gerlach lists a few. A look at Woodstock twenty years later underscores the importance of Philipians 4:8.

1991

"The 3 1/2 Rs" pp. 30,31

An editorial on religion curriculum finding its way into the public schools.

"Who's that sleeping in my bed?" pp. 226,227

In this article Gerlach recounts the events of the fall of East Germany and the dismissal of the Honeckers from East German office. Dismissed from their positions of power, the Honeckers were also evicted from their apartment. With no place to go, the Honeckers were taken in by a Lutheran pastor and his family. This same pastor and his family had suffered under the Honecker regime. This amazing article illustrates what it means to be a reflection of Christ's love in this world.

1992

"Darwin cross-examine posthumously" p. 16

Gerlach comments on a book authored by Philip Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*. The book gives a lawyer's analysis of the evidence offered by evolutionists. Evolution doesn't hold up in court.

"Lottery Mania" p. 156

The Bible doesn't outright say that gambling is sinful. Yet even secular sources will say that gambling is detrimental to our culture. Do we want to take part in things that tear down our society?

"What's going on at the KGB?" p. 197

Russia is opening up to Christianity.

Appendix 3

Contributions to Northwestern Lutheran

1992 continued...

"When the lambs are silent" p. 256

An editorial response to the movie, *Silence of the Lambs* and its unabashed affront to a civilized society. It's sad when the lambs of the Good Shepherd flock to seek such entertainment. Instead we ought to seek "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable."

"Eco-religion -- earth with a capital E" p. 317

This article gives an assessment of a modern mix of environment concerns with ancient myths. The worship of nature goddesses is blended with emphases of feminist movement. The children are being exposed to this kind of eco-religion in Ted Turner's Captain Planet cartoon.

"Murphy Brown -- the real issue" p. 375

"The reason Murphy Brown is a poor role model is that she is an adulteress, not that she is a single mother."

1993

"Ship ahoy" p. 30

The moral climate is threatening. Storm clouds are rolling in. President Clinton's plans to revoke the ban on gays in the military and his plan to rescind the ban against federally funded abortions and his plan to legalize R.U. 486 is all very disturbing.

If the government is ordained by God, why is this happening. God hasn't lost control

"For a word of encouragement in a time of discouragement, there's only one place to look, and that's into God's Word. Come to think of it, that may be God's reason for letting the ship of state lose the its moral compass and flounder."

"Goddess mania" p. 137

Female identity of God is being pushed. It just shows what happens when authority of the Bible is set aside...anything goes.

Appendix 3

Contributions to Northwestern Lutheran

1993 continued...

"Who are the real victims?" p. 251

This editorial comment was launched by Charles J. Sykes' book, *Nation of Victims: The Decay of the American Character*. Sykes wants to get rid of the attitude which denies personal responsibility. Sykes says, "we need to reaffirm a moral vocabulary declaring that it is wrong to steal, to lie, to abuse children, to father babies and not support them, or to gamble away a family's resources. If you commit these offenses, there is no one to blame but yourself."

"We need more books like Sykes' on the best seller list to get Americans to think seriously about where we are headed as a society. But even more, we need Christians who are willing and capable of sharing their convictions in the marketplace of ideas and who can help phony victims see that in reality Satan has made them his victims. They are real victims in the sense that Satan has blinded them to the truth that Jesus offered himself once for all as a victim to give us all the opportunity to be privileged people of God in Christ."

"Technology vs. technolatrly" p. 364

Technology can be the ultimate reality and become a god to serve. Or technology can be used in service to God. That's the way God intended it.

1994

"Score one for the pope" p. 30

In October 1993, Pope John Paul II issued an encyclical, *Veritas Splendor*. It was carefully reasoned statement about the nature of morality. Two weeks later ELCA released "The Church and Human Sexuality: A Lutheran Perspective." The problem goes back to ELCA's view of Scripture...truth is up for grabs. This is truly an embarrassment for Lutherans. Score one for the pope.

"Play ball -- but don't kill the umpire" p. 139

"Berating umpires and coaches, or joining in choruses of boos to humiliate a fellow human being is conduct unbecoming those who profess Christ as Lord."

"Caning and the left hand of God" p. 247

"God ordained government to maintain order in the secular world."

Appendix 3

Contributions to Northwestern Lutheran

1994 continued...

"Rome's new catechism -- semper eadem" p. 355

New wrinkles in presentation...essential theology is unchanged.

1995

"Holy Laughter is no laughing matter" p. 30, April

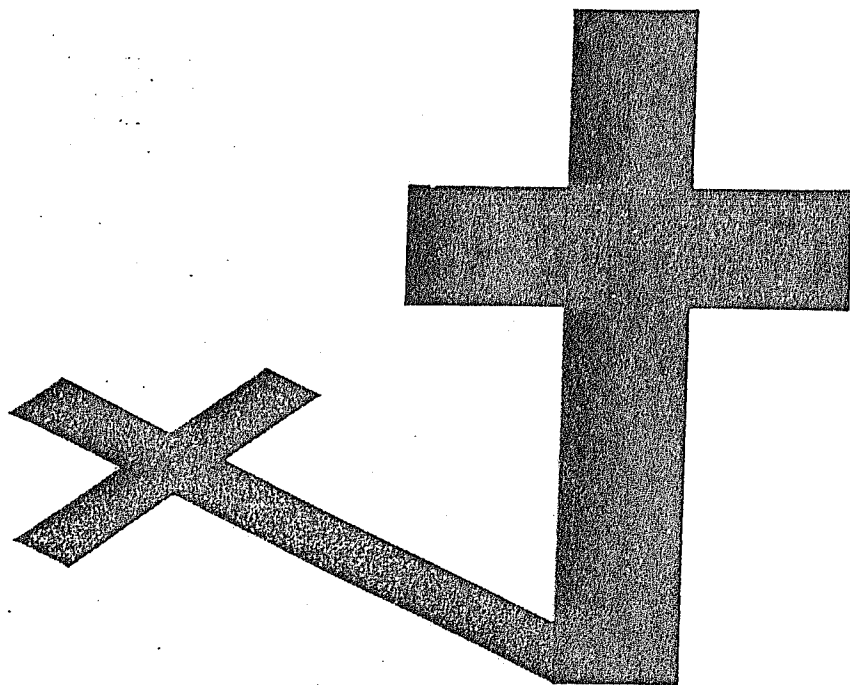
"The Bible does not have a single reference to "holy" laughter. To equate it with joy in the Lord is the height of absurdity."

"*Embraced by the Light*: spiritual nonsense" p. 31, January

"Betty Eadies' book in which she claims to have been embraced by Jesus at death is spiritual nonsense.

"Betty Eadie denies the doctrine of the Trinity, yet claims to have been embraced by The Light." Nonsense!

Appendix 3



LOVE FINDS A WAY

by Joel C. Gerlach

Traffic was heavy on the Bayshore Freeway. A light rain was falling. Brake lights came on in all three lanes. Traffic slowed to a crawl. A car swerved from the fast lane onto the median strip and stopped against the center divider. Another in the slow lane swerved out of traffic, jumped the curb near an offramp and stopped abruptly.

My wife saw her first. She was lying between the fast lane and the middle lane, cars going by on both sides. Apparently she had been struck by a vehicle. She wasn't moving. Someone in the car on the median strip was trying to get back to the scene to help her. Across the freeway a woman jumped from the vehicle stopped on the curb. She was holding a blanket in front of her, trying to slow the traffic, waiting for a chance to dash across the lanes to the victim.

When we were abreast of the scene, traffic forced us to keep moving. Only then did we notice the victim's companion. Where he came from and how he got there I have no idea. He started to run, then dashed back to his companion, bewildered, wild-eyed and in a state of frenzy.

In my rear view mirror I saw the victim trying to lift her head looking for her companion. "She's not dead," I thought to myself, "but she's probably dying." The young woman with the blanket made it safely across the lanes. So did the man whose car had stopped against the center divider. Both had ignored the danger to themselves. Safety was not their first concern. They were determined to do what they could to help. Brave souls!

Incidents like that are not uncommon on metropolitan freeways. Neither was this one.—except for the victim. She was a Doberman pinscher. So was her mate.

As we drove on I began to muse about the scene we had just witnessed. The victim was only a dog. Yet her plight evoked pity from people who saw her lying helpless on the cold, wet concrete. Maybe they could still help her, get her to a vet. Instinctively people want to help, even when grave personal risks are involved.

Thereon hangs a parable of sorts. Life's freeways are full of victims who have been struck a mortal blow. Satan has waylaid them and left them to perish. The evidence is everywhere. Broken lives. Lives in tragic disarray. We're blind if we don't see them.

But it's easy to ignore them, easy to pass them by as though they are someone else's responsibility. Priests and Levites have been known to do that. Christians too. We're preoccupied. Sometimes we prefer to look the other way. We don't want to take risks.

The victim is not someone's Doberman pinscher. The victim is your neighbor. He's hurting, perishing unless *someone* reaches him in time. You are someone. You have the time.

Pray for eyes that see. Pray for a heart full of pity. Pray for courage to take risks. And don't just ask, "Who is my neighbor?" Be one! God gives you love for loving your neighbor. And love finds a way. Love always finds a way. □



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Appendix 3

Never mind Nicaragua. Never mind Konstantin Chernenko, or post-election analyses, or the salvage mission in space, or the resumption of arms reduction talks. For 21 days the world's consuming interest was a baboon's heart beating in the chest cavity of a tiny, 5-pound baby girl. What people wanted to know was: How's Baby Fae doing?

On November 20 her doctors released an autopsy. It was brief and to the point, and perhaps predictable. Baby Fae died because her immune system rejected her baboon's heart.

Medical experts will reflect on the medical implications and lessons for years to come. I know next to nothing about medicine, so I'd like to reflect on a spiritual implication or two of the Baby Fae story.

The Baby Fae episode offers another reminder of the fact that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). Included in that wonderful making is the fact that God made our bodies in such a way that they naturally reject foreign tissue. For that reason organ transplants are successful only if blood and tissue types match. Immune deficiency is an acquired syndrome. And it is fatal.

One theory suggests that our immune system develops as we grow. That's why Loma Linda's medical research team theorized that transplanting an animal's heart into a human would have a greater chance to succeed in an infant than in an older person. Whether or not they are correct remains to be determined.

What is of particular interest to us here is the analogy we can draw to our own spiritual life. God gives us new life in Christ. He sustains and nurtures that new life daily through word and sacrament.

God's grace to us in Christ includes the promise of "immunity." That immunity leads a child of God to reject whatever is foreign to its new nature in Christ. Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice." That is natural for a child of God. "A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him." In this same connection Jesus gives his sheep this reassuring promise, "No man will pluck them out of my hand."

Spiritual vitality is dependent on a properly functioning immune system, much like physical health and vitality are. And a properly functioning spiritual immune system depends on God's word correctly taught together with the sacraments rightly administered.

A Christian's immune system, like that of an AIDS victim, can become deficient, even an acquired syndrome. The result is fatal.

Clearly a Christian puts his new life in Christ in jeopardy when he incorporates into it anything that is untrue to God's Word and thus foreign to the nature of that new life. That's why the Lord directs us, "Hate what is evil; cling to what is good" (Romans 12:9). And that's why Jesus counsels us to "beware of false prophets." False prophets are transplanters of "organs" whose tissue and blood types do not match what God has given us in Christ.

Reflections on Baby Fae

by Joel C. Gerlach

We live in times when an increasing number of Christians seem to be losing their understanding of the spiritual immune system designed by God and of how that system works. An underlying premise of the ecumenical movement is that you can mix theological "tissues" of varying types in an attempt to enhance the spiritual health of the body of Christ. Millions of Christians are enthralled by what they regard as a noble ecumenical experiment, just as people the world over were enthralled with the attempt to save Baby Fae with a baboon's heart.

What grim irony there is in the fact that what many religious people *think* will help to give new life to the church in fact works to destroy it. Ecumenical efforts during the past half century have spawned an appalling insensitivity to the deadly consequences of mixing elements of error with divinely revealed truth. As a consequence generic churches and generic pastors have multiplied by the thousands. Members of such churches view tolerance of conflicting interpretations of the gospel as a strength rather than as a fatal weakness.

If angels ever perform spiritual autopsies, we wonder how many of them read like Baby Fae's: Something foreign was introduced into her system, and as a result she died.

Word and sacraments have been and continue to be heart and lifeblood of a healthy church. They are the source of confessional Lutheranism's health and strength. God help us never to forget that.

No criticism of Dr. Leonard Bailly and his staff at Loma Linda University Medical Center is expressed or implied in what we have said. Scripture does not advise us with respect to transplant surgery. But Scripture does clearly condemn all attempts to combine what is false with what is true in the spiritual arena. □



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Appendix 4

Contributions to Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly
Major Articles*

Volume 70, 1973, Number 4

"A Seminarian's Ongoing Initiation"
"Glossolalia"

Volume 73, 1976, Numbers 3,4

"Humanism, Its Origin, Nature, and Menacing Impact"

Volume 91, 1994, Number 4

"Revitalizing Our Preaching"

*In addition to these major articles, Gerlach was a regular contributor to the "Reviews" and "News and Comments" columns during his years of teaching at the Seminary.

A SEMINARIAN'S ONGOING INITIATION*

Joel C. Gerlach

Text: 1 Corinthians 4:1-2

Members and friends of the Seminary community,

There is an old tradition at this Seminary which doubtless will be dusted off and observed again in the next few weeks. It's called *Gemuetlicher Abend*. Charitably defined, it is a ceremony of initiation for the men of the Junior class. "G.A.," however, is an institution about which there is a measure of divided opinion. Some regard it as something indispensable to the proper integration of the student body. It initiates the neophytes into the secrets of seminary society. Others view it tolerantly and condescendingly as something which provides an opportunity for grown men to conduct themselves like growing boys again for a few weeks.

Be that as it may, these words of the apostle Paul call to our minds at the beginning of this academic year an initiation of another kind about which there is no divided opinion among us, and which is without question vital to the welfare and the functioning of this student body and faculty. Unlike "G.A." which involves only the tyros in our midst, the initiation Paul has in mind involves every one of us, students and faculty alike. It's not just a fall fling sort of thing; it's an ongoing thing, a continuing process. The idea of an initiation is suggested by Paul's reference to the "mysteries of God." Thus as we begin this new year, we wish to let St. Paul teach us something about A SEMINARIAN'S ONGOING INITIATION. His words remind us that (I) we are entrusted with sacred mysteries, and that (II) we are expected to serve faithfully.

I.

Paul begins this epistle with a stirring review of the gospel. It is a word of wisdom and a word of power, he insists. Then in the chapter we heard as the lection for the day, he takes up the question of the place and the function of those who proclaim that potent word to an impotent world. They are not chiefs; they are servants. But the Corinthians hadn't gotten that straight yet. Some of them were still party people, some were prima donna Christians. Some belonged to Paul's party, some to Peter's, and some to Apollos'.

*This sermon was preached at the Seminary opening service on September 11, 1973. By request, the prayer from that service is also being published.

"Forget it," Paul tells them bluntly, "I don't want anybody claiming me for his party chief. You are Christ's holy people (3:23), you are God's husbandry, God's building (3:9), God's temple with God's Spirit dwelling in you (3:16). Apollos and I are only laborers together with God — mere servants who do His planting and watering for Him. This then is the way I want a person to regard us, 'as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.'"

By the unfathomable grace of God you and I are now stewards of those mysteries too. The word "mysteries" is an instructive one. In classical Greek a *mysteerion* was a religious secret, confided only to the initiated and to be kept strictly confidential. In Scripture it also means a religious secret, secret however not because the Revealer of the secret expects us to keep it strictly confidential, but only because it is a truth not obvious to human understanding. The mysteries of God are truths which the eye hath not seen nor the ear heard, nor have they entered into the heart of man.

God's mysteries then are sacred secrets into which we need to be continually initiated. That is why this institution is here, and that is what a seminary training is all about. It's an initiation process which involves the learning of the sacred secrets of God. The Headmaster of this school is someone "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Yes, all! And He has no intention of keeping any of them hidden from you or from anyone else.

When you stop to think of it, that really boggles the mind, doesn't it? People out there in the world are running around like mad trying to discover the secrets of life and death, and here they are, like gems spilling out all over the place! A few weeks ago I stood in line several times trying unsuccessfully to get into the Senate caucus room where a Senate committee was endeavoring to uncover the secrets of the Watergate scandal. We never made it because the line was too long. Too many people wanted to find out those secrets first hand. Yet here in these hallowed halls God Himself, who knows all the secrets of life and death and destiny, is going to divulge His secrets, and no one is standing in line beating on the door trying to get in. In fact our people had to do a lot of hard praying just to get you here.

The mysteries of God are indeed not obvious to our understanding. To natural man they are still foolishness. But by the good fortune of grace, we have come to know them. Our initiation into the mysteries of grace came in the simple ceremony of baptism at which time God changed us from little waifs into titled princes by adoption. The initia-

tion has proceeded apace ever since as God's Spirit helped us "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

Grace, that is what the mysteries are all about, amazing grace, redeeming, justifying, universal grace. It's grace, that same marvelous grace of God, that brings tears of joy to the eyes of this miserable old sinner, grace that keeps reassuring me that God sees me as a twin brother to His Son. If I hadn't been initiated into the mysteries of grace, I'd never have realized that all the things of which I tend to make my boast are really only filthy rags, fit only to be draped on the naked body of the despised Galilean who died for me. That He could love me — that really is a mystery. But that He *does*, that's no mystery anymore at all.

It is no secret to you either that God loves you. But it is to the world. The world does not know the love of God. The world talks a lot about love, even about a loving God. To the uninitiated, however, that talk is just so much whistling in the dark. It's a guess, not a certainty. But God doesn't want anybody to go through life whistling in the dark. That is why He needs stewards of His mysteries. We are those stewards, entrusted by Him with the happy task of disclosing His secrets so people can stop whistling and start singing the praises of Him who died for them and rose again and who now calls men out of darkness into His marvelous light. We have assembled here today to begin another round of that entrusting process. God's Spirit is about to plunge us all deeper into the depths of the riches and wisdom of God.

II.

What a trust, that the eternal, all-knowing God should have chosen to reveal His secrets to me — to you. As I look you over I can't see any one worthy of His trust, not even back there in faculty row. Our God, of course, doesn't expect us to qualify for the honor of being entrusted with His secrets, but once He entrusts us with them, He does expect us to serve faithfully. That is the other side to the truth Paul's words bring to mind about a seminarian's initiation. "Moreover," Paul says, "it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."

As servants who are expected to serve faithfully, we take our cue from Paul. Our task is to "preach Christ crucified . . . the power of God, and the wisdom of God." To that end we study theology, exegetical, systematic, historical. We want to be able to tell it like it is. We also want to be effective preachers and teachers of God's Word. Remembering who it is we serve, we strive for excellence, never content with the cultivation of mediocrity.

Faithful service however involves more than just saying the right things from the pulpit and teaching correctly in the classroom. Our theology is also pastoral. Our Lord wants the pastors of His people also to be examples to their flocks. He wants you to remember that your life and conduct also comprise "an epistle of Christ, known and read of all men, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God" on a tablet of flesh.

That is always the difficult part of a seminarian's initiation. The academic part is the easy part. God has given you the necessary gifts for that, and you've come here prepared. But the "shaping up" process is another thing. There's an old Adam in each of us who keeps telling us we've shaped up enough already. No need to get fanatical about religion! And then there is also the world exerting constant pressure on us to conform and to be comfortable. But from Paul comes the gentle reminder not to "let the world around you squeeze you into its mold, but (to) let God remold your minds from within" (Ro 12:2, Phillips). That remolding process is part of our continuing initiation.

"Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." That's clear enough, generally speaking. But what does it mean specifically? I think I know what it means for me and my colleagues. Let me say a word about what I think it means for you. It means recognizing that Satan has temptations specially designed for seminarians, cleverly designed, too, I might add, in view of your rights and your Christian freedom.

There's the matter of class assignments, for example, so easy to slough off when you catch on to the system. How much or how little you give to them is a measure of your faithfulness. And there's the matter of conscientiously submitting work on due dates as part of your preparation for the ministry, an "on time" calling if ever there was one. That too is a part of being faithful. Class attendance can also be a measure of your faithfulness, and chapel participation. Even though the quality of chapel addresses, including this one, offers evidence that we carry this treasure in earthen vessels, yet the Spirit will be here every day looking for hearts to inspire and to inflame.

Faithfulness is also measurable in terms of our relationships to one another. We are brothers in Christ with a mutual respect for one another. You will want to remember that when someone wears your patience thin, whether he be fellow student or member of the faculty. We have no dazzling "name" theologians on this faculty, no Moltmann, Bultmann, Pannenberg, Cox, or Marty. But thank God we have unanimity and fidelity to the Word. Some may not think that very

glamorous or exciting. But it is for those who have been initiated into the fact that real excitement derives from deepening one's understanding of the mysteries of God, not from hearing someone good at scratching itching ears.

So as your Lord begins the process of initiation anew today, He reminds you in that quiet, gentle voice of His that you, yes *you*, are privileged to be servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. He expects you to serve faithfully. But how can He expect that when He knows us as He does? How are we ever going to muster the strength to serve according to His expectations? Listen again to Paul. You are Christ's holy people, *God's* building, *God's* field, *God's* husbandry, *God's* temple with *God's* Spirit dwelling in you. God says so. If that doesn't inspire you for what lies ahead, nothing can. With that assurance we can all walk out of this chapel this morning confidently saying to ourselves, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE OPENING SERVICE, SEMINARY, 1973

O gracious God of our salvation, Father of this entire seminary family, there are so many things for which we are grateful to You at the beginning of this new school year. Most of all we thank You for ending the damning curse and consequences of sin for us, and for initiating us into the holy joy of knowing Your Son as our Savior and Brother. We thank You also for the special privilege of being here at this school of the prophets. How considerate of You to make it possible for us to spend this year together at Jesus' feet absorbed daily in the exciting study of the sacred secrets of Your saving grace.

We thank You for preserving us all in mind and body during the summer months, and for helping us to be ready to take up anew today the pleasant task of preparing ourselves for our ministry. We thank You for giving us all these men who have dedicated themselves to the service of the Savior.

We thank You for the teachers whom You have provided to help prepare these future pastors of Your people.

We thank You for the prayers and sacrifices of all our fellow Christians who make the continued existence of this institution possible, and

We thank You particularly for the unity of Spirit You have granted to our Synod and to this Seminary, its teachers and its students.

Forgive us for our tendency to accept Your gifts so matter-of-factly. Preserve that unanimity in our midst again during this new school

year. Help us to know and remember how fragile it is, and let none of us ever be guilty of fracturing it either by thoughtlessness or through infidelity. Continue to spare us, O Lord, from the evils of divisiveness and polarization.

Pour out Your Spirit on us as we begin our work. Bless students and faculty alike, and make this a good year for us all. Bless also our president with an extra measure of health, strength, and wisdom to administer his office and to promote the welfare of this school.

As the Spirit stirs in our midst, give us minds always open to His insights and impulses together with the determination to act on them. Thus may we prove ourselves to be faithful at all times in all things. Help us to approach our work each day not merely as an academic exercise, but rather as an exercise of faith. May we conduct ourselves so that others not only see the light in us, but also feel the warmth of that light. We want to remember that we learn about Your love so that we too can love. Because we are so secluded here on Seminary hill, we must be careful not to add insulation to our isolation. May we be known therefore for our love as well as for our convictions.

Keep us aware of the hurts and the joys of those around us, and move us to respond sensitively as each occasion requires. When a friend has a problem, make us as ready to lend an ear as we are to offer a word. When we speak with voices of dissent or criticism or admonition, may our words always be spoken in love and received in the same spirit.

So let our growth in sanctified living also be an essential part of our learning. For we truly *want* to be useful servants of Christ and faithful stewards of the mysteries of God. Send us forth, then, from this hour of worship with the expectation of meeting You regularly in our work, and also of meeting You soon in person. We ask all these things confidently in Jesus' name. Amen.