

Our Primary Calling—Providing Pastoral Candidates

By Armin J. Panning

It is axiomatic that to achieve the greatest possible clarity and understanding in regard to important matters one must not only describe the matter in question in positive terms, but also supply the negative. It is necessary to state also what is *not* meant and what is *not* intended. Hence, in a matter as weighty as giving a clear exposition of our understanding of scriptural doctrine the Lutheran Confessions wisely supply antitheses to the thetical statements.

A first-time reader of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's *Catalog* may be struck by the fact that the opening two-sentence paragraph of the school's official publication is in the form of thesis and antithesis. In speaking of the seminary's purpose, the *Catalog* states:

The specific purpose of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is to offer theological training for men who desire to enter the public ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod or of churches within its confessional fellowship. It is not established or maintained to serve merely or in part as a school of religion furnishing opportunity to anyone for specialized study in various fields of theology.ⁱ

Thanks to the positive and negative statements, there can be no mistaking what Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's purpose is. To be sure, the seminary offers theological training, but it is not a school of religion open to everyone wishing to prepare himself for specialized or self-chosen fields of theological pursuit. Two things rule that out.

First of all, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is a confessional school. It is bound by the Scriptures and thus committed to teaching all of God's Word, but only God's Word. Hence, it would be inconsistent to tolerate unscriptural teaching in the classroom. The second paragraph of the *Catalog's* purpose expands on this by saying:

The Seminary carries out this purpose by training all of its students...in accordance with the Holy Scriptures as the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God and in conscious agreement with the historical Confessions of the Lutheran Church.ⁱⁱ

But there is also a second consideration why Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is not a general school of religion—open, let's say, to all confessionally minded scholars. That reason is: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary exists "to offer theological training for men who desire to enter the *public ministry* of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod or of churches within its confessional fellowship." Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is inseparably bound to the parish. It trains men in the skill of applying the means of grace to the hearts and lives of sinners in a parish setting, rather than equipping men with a training intended for academic or professional pursuits. Furthermore, the seminary exists for the specific purpose of serving *confessionally sound* congregations. Or to invert that formula a bit: Confessionally minded congregations, bound together in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, have established Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in order that through it they may receive doctrinally sound pastors.

Set forth in our *Catalog* in thesis and antithesis, it is a clearly defined purpose which the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has laid out for its seminary to follow. But that strong statement of purpose represents a development. It wasn't always so. From the vantage point of 125 years of God's guidance and grace, we do well to take a backward look. We will then see that the Wisconsin Synod has grown in its perception of how men should be trained for effective ministry. And, under God, it has become possible gradually to translate those clearer perceptions into a program of training that for a century and a quarter has produced capable Kingdom workers.

If there were weaknesses and shortcomings in the worker-training efforts during the early days of our synod, they can, of course, be blamed to a large extent on the primitive state of things in the new world. There was, however, another and an even more detrimental feature that plagued the whole matter of providing workers for the Lutheran church in its new home. That was a misunderstanding as to what sort of service a true preacher of the gospel should be expected to render to the people whom he was asked to serve.

The first feature, the primitive and undeveloped status of things on the frontier, made it impossible to train preachers locally, since there were as yet no theological schools on the frontier. Hence, the newly arrived immigrants naturally looked back to their homeland in Europe, usually Germany, to provide them with trained pastors. The second feature, the misconception regarding the service that a gospel preacher owed his congregation(s), made congregations willing to accept, and even to seek, a pastor whose teaching and practice would be broad enough to allow him to serve the whole “evangelical” community.

To a certain extent, this latter weakness was characteristic of their native Germany too, where the Prussian Union attempted to bring Lutheran and Reformed elements together into one church. To be sure, some orthodox or “Old Lutherans” left Germany in search of religious freedom. But many others, “mild Lutherans” not at all uncomfortable with the Union, left Germany to find their fortunes in the new world. They were joined by a host of Reformed and Evangelical immigrants. When these settled next to each other in America, there was a very strong tendency, in view of the acute shortage of pastors, to engage a “generic” type of pastor who would serve as large a percentage of the community as possible. In short, outside of the “Old Lutherans” there was very little confessional sensitivity; doctrinal indifference and unionism ran rampant. Both features, a shortage of qualified pastors and unionism on the part of those who were available, are characteristic also of the forebears of our Wisconsin Synod. The history of any number of our early congregations could be cited to show this.

As an illustration of the shortage of qualified pastors we might look at the situation of the Oakwood congregation located on Kilbourn Road on the south side of old Milwaukee. It is the oldest of those congregations that eventually joined together to found the Wisconsin Synod. Town Oakwood, a congregation of some 300 souls in a community that was totally “evangelical,” originally had a trained Lutheran pastor, but he had to be dismissed because of a scandalous life. In the absence of anyone else to serve, a certain Ehrenfried Seebach, a farmer by vocation, conducted reading services and offered religious instruction to the children. When the congregation agreed to build a parsonage and provide an adequate salary for a trained pastor, Seebach in 1846 sent off a request that eventually came to the Langenberg Mission Society in northwestern Germany. Of the three trained men whom they had available for service in the new world, John Weinmann was designated to serve the Oakwood congregation.

Town Oakwood’s method of getting a pastor from European sources, particularly the mission societies, is typical of the way in which many Wisconsin Synod congregations had to be supplied before the synod had the facilities to train its own men. Since the mission societies themselves tended to be favorably inclined toward the Prussian Union and hence not confessionally minded, many of the men they trained had no particular scruples about serving people of both Lutheran and Reformed persuasions. That, too, can be illustrated in the experience of the Oakwood congregation and its neighbors.

Pastor Weinmann evidently was a conscientious pastor, very much concerned about the unserved lost and erring whom he saw all around him. Hence, he addressed a stirring letter describing the great spiritual need in Wisconsin to another Langenberg graduate, John Muehlhaeuser, the first missionary that society had sent to America. Muehlhaeuser had been serving some nine or ten years in the state of New York, but he now heeded Weinmann’s encouragement and came to Wisconsin as a colporteur with the New York Tract Society, selling Bibles and devotional literature and preaching to any group he could assemble.

Muehlhaeuser’s lack of confessional soundness was evident from the start, and it showed itself at every turn. When failing health made it necessary for him to give up the rigorous life of a traveling book salesman, he accepted the advice of a Presbyterian pastor, A. L. Shapin, and a Congregational pastor, R. Miter, to begin a congregation in Milwaukee. He did this in October 1848. It will hardly surprise us that his congregation was incorporated as an Evangelical congregation rather than Lutheran. Let it be said to Muehlhaeuser’s credit, however, that at the urging, particularly of Weinmann, the congregation in May of the next year reorganized as

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Congregation—a name that soon was changed to *Gnaden-Gemeinde*, familiar to us as the present Grace congregation in downtown Milwaukee.

That we have not misrepresented Muehlhaeuser's lack of confessional sensitivity can be substantiated by a letter of his to a certain Gotthilf Weitbrecht. Weitbrecht was a Lutheran pastor who turned Methodist. Muehlhaeuser admonished him for his new convictions, only to hear from Weitbrecht that he (Muehlhaeuser) had no convictions at all and was really neither Lutheran nor Evangelical, though he tried to be both. Rather than deny the charge, Muehlhaeuser defended his position. In a November 1853 letter he writes:

Just because I am not strictly "Lutheran" or Old Lutheran, I am in a position to offer every child of God and servant of Christ the hand of fellowship over the ecclesiastical fence. I have quite often been together with English preachers of the various denominations in ministerial conference, and we respected and loved each other as brethren and deliberated on the general welfare of the church. So I am not, dear Methodist brother, withdrawing the hand of brotherhood from you if you are a Methodist in the spirit of the Methodist church's founder. But I fear you will have to withdraw from me if you don't want to be looked at askance by your Methodist brethren.ⁱⁱⁱ

Muehlhaeuser, it is to be noted, had four years earlier in the organizational meeting of the synod been elected its president. Suffice it to say, in its fledgling days the Wisconsin Synod was a long way from having, or even wanting to have, a staunchly confessional seminary.

That is not to say that the synod was not from the very beginning concerned about preparing men for the ministry. Every pastor had an oppressive work load and was constantly forced to think of finding more workers for the growing field. In 1850 at the first official synod meeting, a year after the preliminary organization, the five pastors in attendance were serving eighteen congregations. Actually, only three of them (Muehlhaeuser, Weinmann and a certain William Wrede—all Langenberg men) had a full theological training.

The fourth man was Paul Meiss. A cobbler by trade, he had begun studies in Germany with the Langenberg Society but was counseled out of the program. On his own he came to America, intending to serve in the Reformed church. He took up his studies here but before finishing was accepted without license as the pastor of the United congregation in Granville. Thus he came into the circle of Wisconsin Synod pastors and was present at the 1849 organization and at the May 1850 meeting in Granville, though by that time he was stationed in the Slinger, Wisconsin, area.

The fifth pastor in attendance at the 1850 Granville meeting was Kaspar Pluess, who as a student had been dismissed by the Basel Mission Society. He was licensed at the 1850 Granville meeting, though according to the record he seems already before this to have been serving four congregations. The point is: there were far too few men to meet the pressing spiritual needs, and some of the men who were in service were marginally qualified.

Although there was no talk of a seminary at the 1850 meeting, there were discussions about worker training. A certain Jacob Conrad, another New York bookseller, was in attendance and indicated his willingness to prepare for parish service. The synod in convention assigned him to Wrede as his vicar in the hope that he could be trained as a pastor and then licensed to serve a congregation.

Beside the two avenues of either getting fully trained men from Germany or training volunteers in local congregations, there was also the attempt to train promising young men at existing theological schools. Naturally, there was the thought of sending young men back to Germany to receive their theological training and then having them return to serve in America. That idea seems never to have caught on very well. A plan likelier to succeed was that of forming closer ties with schools "in the East" and using them as training places for our men, or even accepting their graduates for placement into our frontier congregations.

During the years 1857 to 1860 there were serious negotiations with Illinois State University to enter into a joint pastor training arrangement. Lest there be any misunderstanding, it should perhaps be noted that Illinois State University, located at Springfield, was not a public school connected with the State of Illinois but a

training school utilized by the Northern Illinois Synod and other synods. When the school closed, the campus was acquired by the Missouri Synod and until fairly recent times served as the “practical seminary” of that synod.

Negotiations with the Northern Illinois Synod were dropped in the 1860 convention at Fond du Lac, but meanwhile there were also connections and working arrangements with other institutions of learning in the East. One of the more productive arrangements was with Gettysburg Seminary of the Pennsylvania Ministerium, which belonged to the large General Synod founded in 1820.

At the time under discussion, that is the late 1850s and early 1860s, Gettysburg had become so liberal that a conservative element of the Pennsylvania Ministerium founded an opposition seminary at Philadelphia. The inner turmoil caused by liberalism in the Pennsylvania Ministerium is indicative of the unrest that festered throughout the General Synod. A realignment came about when the more conservative element in the General Synod left in 1866 to found the General Council.

Pertinent to our discussion of training early Wisconsin Synod pastors is the fact that the Wisconsin Synod was already at this time moving toward a more conservative stance. That will explain, in part, the note of resignation that sounds through when the 1903 *History of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary*, probably authored by Dr. Adolf Hoenecke, deplors the fact that at the 1861 synod in Watertown the idea of the Wisconsin Synod having its own seminary had to be given up. Ruefully he adds, “It [the Wisconsin Synod] had to be satisfied with training available young men at Gettysburg.”^{iv}

But the idea of having its own seminary was not dead. Far from it! The very next convention, held in Columbus in 1862, accepted the recommendation of a special committee urging the immediate establishment of a seminary. The site they suggested was Watertown.

It remained for the Watertown convention of May 1863 to pass the resolution actually founding a seminary. The idea of starting its own seminary received strong support from Pastor John Bading, the president of the synod. The fact that he was serving St. Mark congregation in Watertown made it natural for him to favor the idea of locating the seminary in Watertown rather than in Milwaukee, which also had strong proponents. Recommended as director of the fledgling seminary was Pastor Eduard Moldehnke, a graduate of the University of Halle and the field secretary of missions in the Wisconsin Synod since his having been taken into membership at the synod convention the previous year (1862). Pastor Bading at once agreed to make a trip to his native Germany in order to solicit funds for the new school. Like so many others, he, too, was a Langenberg man, sent to America by the society in 1853, although he had received most of his training at Hermannsburg. It will be evident that going back to the missionary societies of Germany and applying to them for financial aid immediately put the seminary into the position of being obligated to a group whose confessional leanings were much toward “unionizing” and a “mild” type of Lutheranism.

That was a problem which would have to be faced, but for the time being the financial “drive” was very successful. In the course of a six-month tour of Germany and even parts of Russia, President Bading was able to secure pledges totaling \$11,721 German Taler.^v Incidentally, the “vacancy” at St. Mark caused by Pastor Bading’s trip to Europe was filled by Pastor Adolf Hoenecke of nearby Farmington, who was received into synod membership at the 1863 convention.

So, although the financial status of the new school looked fairly sound at this time, a very real problem was finding suitable students. Only two students enrolled the first year, but there never was more than one in school at the same time. The first student, meeting privately with Professor Moldehnke in his home, was already let go in October. The second student, A. Siegler, enrolled in November and graduated in 1868, going on to render good service to the synod.

Fifty percent attrition during the first year may sound bad, but the second year seems to have been worse. The 1903 *Catalog*, the first formal catalog printed by the seminary, contains the short history of the seminary already alluded to. But in addition to the early history it also includes a fascinating list of student names indicating the enrollment (*Eingetreten*) by years. For the second year of the school’s existence (1864), the catalog lists the names of six enrollees and after them is a dash with the ominous entry: “*wurden 1865 entlassen*”—“dismissed in 1865.” Apparently there was a 100 percent attrition in that batch of students. And so

the early rosters are dotted with the names of enrolling students who, instead of having listed for them a year of graduation and the place to which they were assigned, are designated with the somber *Entlassen*.

It took no great mental acumen to realize that qualified candidates for the ministry could not be produced unless there was a supply of competent students to enroll in the seminary. Hence, from early on there was the intention of including a college in the training program. That became a reality in 1865. Empowered by the synod convention that June, the school trustees called Professor Adam Martin to head up the college, which would be sharing space with the seminary in the new building that had been authorized the previous year and now was nearing completion. Recall that Moldehnke was the lone professor in the seminary. These two professors, Moldehnke and Martin, were in charge of the eleven-man student body when the combined college-seminary dedicated its new building on September 14, 1865.

Even offering training beginning at the college level, was not adequate, however. That fact too was recognized by the 1865 synod convention. *The History of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary* notes, "At this convention the need for a pre-seminary was also discussed. The hope was that in this way young people might be gained for a so-called practical-theoretical education."^{vi}

In successive years synod conventions regularly busied themselves with the question of how to prepare qualified people who could then continue their training in the combined college-seminary and become pastors. In the 1867 convention there was an attempt to set up a pretheological school with the help of Dr. J. Wichern, the noted administrator of a boys' school in Hamburg, Germany. At its next meeting "the synod renewed its efforts to get students for the seminary from Germany or to get a pretheological school in Germany."^{vii} To that end it was ready to enter into negotiations with Pastor L. Harms of the Hermannsburger Mission, with the Lutheran Conference of Minden-Ravensberg and with the pastoral association of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. One terse sentence from *The History of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary* says it all, "None of these negotiations had the desired outcome."^{viii}

There were reasons for that, of course. A very great contributor was the increasing loyalty to true Lutheranism and the Confessions that was growing in the Wisconsin Synod. That was in large part due, under God, to the strong conservative leadership that was being offered by Professor Adolf Hoenecke, who in 1866 had replaced Moldehnke as the seminary professor. Under Hoenecke's influence the synod in 1867 adopted resolutions disavowing Prussian unionism. This not only cost the infant synod the support of the unionistic German mission societies, who now were no longer willing to be helpful in supplying men and joint worker-training arrangements, but it resulted also in the loss of considerable money that had been raised through Bading's efforts. Some 7,500 German Taler were forfeited when pledged monies were retained by the Prussian consistory.^{ix}

But financial difficulties were not the only, or perhaps even the worst, of the problems that beset the early college-seminary institution. A more serious problem was that the college was not viewed or promoted primarily as a worker-training school intended to get men ready for the seminary and the parish ministry. It was viewed rather as an American college! That is painfully evident in the promotional article that appeared in the very first issue of the *Gemeindeblatt* (September 1, 1865). It states somewhat grandly:

The aim which the Board of Trustees proposes for this institution is to fit the scholars entrusted to them for every higher walk of life by comprehensive and thorough instruction. Their interest is to organize and govern the institution so that it may rank with the best institutes of this country in respect to educational efficiency. Now it is merely a matter of support by the citizens of this state to reach as soon as possible this goal that serves wholly the interests of the citizenry.... Though it is under the jurisdiction of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin, the purpose is not to solicit for any confession, but simply to offer the above-mentioned advantages of education and culture in a genuinely Christian setting.^x

With that kind of educational program envisioned for the college, it is obvious that broad interest from the community was expected. In fact, the college's first president, Adam Martin, had a grandiose plan of

financing the school by selling scholarships to residents of the community. Two plans were available. One type of scholarship offered four years of education to a specific student if a \$100 tuition fee was paid in advance. The other was a \$500 plan that would grant “the hereditary, negotiable, and perpetual right of free instruction for one student.”^{xi}

It should be no surprise that such a college did not produce enough students for the seminary, which was housed on the same campus. Obtaining an adequate number of seminary-trained graduates to serve as pastors in Wisconsin Synod congregations remained an on-going problem—to the point that the need for an effective worker-training system was a key factor in the thoughts that led to the formation of the Synodical Conference. In the wake of the doctrinal agreement that was arrived at particularly between Wisconsin and Missouri in the latter half of the 1860s, thus making the Conference possible, there evolved also a plan for operating a joint worker-training system. The Wisconsin Synod seminary professor (Hoenecke) and students were to transfer to the seminary at St. Louis. Missouri in turn would send students and a professor (Stellhorn) to Northwestern.

That worker-training really was an important consideration in these negotiations is evident from President Bading’s report to the 1869 synod convention at Helenville, Wisconsin. He states:

Through the accord with the Synod of Missouri plans of a far-reaching nature in regard to our institutions have cropped up. In order by joint effort to achieve something great and effective for the cause of the Lord and our church, if such be His will, the question has been broached whether it might not be well to merge our Seminary with that of the Synod of Missouri at St. Louis for the purpose of establishing together with them ... a seminary after the pattern of a German university’s divinity school and secure for our students a larger number of professors, and of making our College at Watertown, on the other hand, a flourishing and influential gymnasium by the appointment of teachers and sending of students on the part of the Missouri Synod.^{xii}

The exchange program never worked very well, and it lasted only eight years, from 1869 to 1877. The Wisconsin Synod never succeeded in supplying a seminary professor at St. Louis. Professor Stellhorn left Northwestern in 1874 when Missouri at Wisconsin’s request terminated Stellhorn’s Watertown post. He took with him most of the Missouri students. Misgivings about greater centralization in the Synodical Conference in the form of suggested “state synods,” as well as the Ohio Synod plan for combining all the seminaries into one central seminary, made Wisconsin Synod leaders wary. Hence, in 1877 there was the resolution to discontinue the exchange program and once more to establish our own seminary, this time in Milwaukee.

Painful as that decision was, and precarious as well, it had the wholesome effect of forcing the synod to rethink its worker-training system, now that it was once more “going it alone.” It was a momentous decision, a turn in the road, when the conclusion was reached to get serious about implementing the *gymnasium* system that President Bading had spoken of in his 1869 report to the synod. That meant renouncing the dream of having the preseminary school be an American college. It meant changing the language at the college from English to German and revising its curriculum to make it a true preministerial school. It meant litigation with scholarship holders, who had been promised a different type of program. But it was also the only avenue that held any promise of providing the pastor candidates needed by the synod that was being asked to support the college and seminary.

As we look back from our vantage point in history, we recognize that those were critical times for the synod and its seminary. God’s guiding hand is evident at every turn in the 125 years of grace that have been showered on the seminary, but perhaps nowhere more clearly than in those formative days when our fathers had to wrestle with the matter of preseminary training. Just how critical the matter was will be evident from one of the early Northwestern College reports. It minces no words in reporting to the synod:

In its present plight our institution is like a ship at sea that has sprung a leak and that is being kept afloat only with the greatest difficulty. We fear that our poor ship will very soon go to the bottom. We fear, too, that the necessary help will not be granted, and if granted, will come too

late; for many pastors and congregations in the Synod have up to the present time shown little interest in the existence and survival of the school.^{xiii}

But as always, the Lord's help and guidance came to his church at precisely the right time. In his 1961 synod essay Professor E. E. Kowalke observed:

It was at the time when the fortunes of the school were at the lowest ebb that help came from an unexpected source. Professor Meumann and Professor Ernst had been added to the faculty and both of these men believed firmly that the only hope for the school lay in setting a new course. It was through the influence of these two men that the language used in the school and the curriculum were changed. Today's students would hear with utter disbelief that their school was once saved by changing the language commonly used in the classroom from English to German and by introducing the course based on Latin and Greek that still characterizes the curriculum. The attitude of the congregations did not change at once, but from the time that that change was made there was noticeable a confidence that the school really intended to serve the congregations as a training school for pastors and teachers.^{xiv}

The synod's confidence in the seminary as the place where its pastors are to be trained has been very much in evidence ever since, particularly in its generous support of the seminary with men, money and buildings. As has already been stated, in 1878—after eight years of joint seminary training with the Missouri Synod in St. Louis—the seminary was reestablished as Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and located in Milwaukee. Its initial home was a rented dwelling with a student body of six seminarians served by three faculty members, who, however, had many other duties in addition to their seminary work. Professor Hoenecke, for example, served as the pastor of St. Matthew congregation in Milwaukee until 1889, when failing health forced him to give up the parish work in order to continue serving at the seminary.

From the start it was evident that the seminary would need a more permanent location. Hence, already during the first year in Milwaukee the synod resolved to buy the Eimermann Park property at 13th and Vine Streets for \$7,000. The property had a sizable building on it that lent itself for remodeling into a seminary adequate for the eighteen-man student body of 1879 and for a dozen years to come.

A greatly changed situation developed in 1892 when the Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan synods united into one body, thus creating the potential for a significantly larger student body to be trained at the seminary. In addition to the overcrowding, there was also “the very unfavorable finding by the state authorities on the condition of the seminary building and the order that all problems be corrected.”^{xv}

Really the only question was whether to rebuild on the old location or to seek out a new site. The 1892 synod convention opted for a new location. Property was acquired at 60th and Lloyd Streets in Wauwatosa, part of the Pabst farm, where the new school and two professorages were to be built. A third professorage was resolved upon in the 1893 synod convention, and the new plant was dedicated on September 17 of that year at a cost just under \$40,000. Although relatively small, about four acres, this campus served well for the next 36 years.

By the late 1920s, however, there were serious space problems. The seminary building contained only two classrooms. There was no possibility of expanding, nor was there much inclination to do so on that site, since the synod really did not hold clear title to the land. Hence, the decision to move the seminary once more.

After an extensive land search, in which the synod's building committee bought and subsequently again sold properties in Oconomowoc and on the east side of Milwaukee, the choice eventually settled on an eighty-acre dairy farm in Ozaukee County, fifteen miles north of Milwaukee and just west of the village of Thiensville. The purchase price of the land in 1927 was \$25,000. The new plant, which included the entire teaching and student resident complex, plus four professorages, was completed at a cost of \$352,000 and was dedicated on August 18, 1929.

These significant expenditures (\$7,000 for Eimermann's Park in 1878; \$40,000 for the Wauwatosa campus in 1893, as well as the \$352,000 for the 1929 plant) are incontrovertible testimony to the massive support the synod has been willing to lend to its seminary—particularly when we realize that at the dedication in 1929 the new seminary was completely paid for.

The synod has continued its generous support of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. When in the 1960s there was a marked increase in the size of the student body, the synod in the seminary's centennial year (1963) added two sections to the dormitory. To allow a two-way division in each of the three on-campus classes, the synod in 1968 built a fine new library and converted the vacated old library area and a basement recreation room into three additional classrooms. Two years later it renovated the kitchen and enlarged the dining hall.

When in recent times an even larger student body came to require a three-way division in the three classes, calling for nine classrooms, two of these were provided by "borrowing" library stack space for temporary classrooms. That problem is in the process of being remedied. The synod's generosity in providing the funds for a \$1,250,000 auditorium/gymnasium has not only provided a very beautiful and functional replacement for the obsolete original gymnasium under the chapel, but it allows the possibility of converting the old gymnasium space into two classrooms as well as an audio-visual room and the synodical archives, which the synod has asked the seminary to house on its campus.

Truly, the synod has been most generous in its support of the seminary over the past 125 years! That support, however, has not been only financial but also in the form of manpower.

In its Watertown days (1863–1870) the seminary faculty consisted of only one professor. From 1866 on that man was Professor Adolf Hoenecke, to whom the synod and the seminary owe so much. As was noted, the Wisconsin Synod did not succeed in supplying a faculty member for the joint seminary in St. Louis. When the seminary was reestablished in Milwaukee, it opened with a faculty of three men, one of whom again was Hoenecke. The Wauwatosa faculty in 1915 became a four-man staff, the same faculty strength that was provided for in 1929 when four professorages were built on the Thiensville campus. By the time of this writer's seminary days (1953–57), the faculty had grown to eight teachers. With the upsurge of enrollment in the 1960s, one or two new faculty members were installed every school year between 1969 and 1975, bringing the faculty to its present strength of sixteen full-time men. In the 125 years of the seminary's existence, the synod has released from parish service 47 men to occupy faculty chairs at the seminary. Many of these have rendered long and distinguished terms of service, such as those of Adolf Hoenecke, Joh. P. Koehler, August Pieper, Joh. P. Meyer and Carl J. Lawrenz, to mention but a few.^{xvi}

But the synod has been generous also in furnishing the seminary with its most precious and most personal commodity, its own sons—talented and dedicated Christian young men willing to study and prepare themselves for the public ministry. Providing totally accurate student attendance statistics from the very beginning is a somewhat precarious undertaking, to say the least. At some points the record requires a bit of interpretation and detective work. Furthermore, enrollments are not the same as graduations, and not all of those who completed their on-campus work went on to serve in the parish ministry. Hence, it is unquestionably best to proceed with some caution here. But perhaps even a relatively accurate figure will help us to recognize and appreciate the significant contribution the seminary has enjoyed from those some 2,814 young men who have enrolled at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

A rough tally would seem to indicate the following approximate enrollments in the five eras of the seminary. In the Watertown era there were 20 enrollees over a seven-year period, or an average incoming class of about 2.9. During the eight years at St. Louis 22 students enrolled, for an annual average incoming class of 2.7. During the fifteen Milwaukee years 136 students enrolled, for an average annual enrollment of 9. On the Wauwatosa campus 542 students enrolled over a period of 36 years, for annual average incoming class of 15. During the 58 years on the Thiensville/Mequon campus 2,094 men have enrolled, for an annual average incoming class of 36.1.

It should furthermore be noted that, once students have enrolled at the seminary, the synod has not neglected them but has continued to subsidize and support them very generously. It is able to do so because currently about 35 percent of the synod's budget is earmarked for worker-training. Whether in times of budget

stringencies that percentage can or should be maintained is certainly an area that may legitimately be discussed and debated. But we do need to recognize with profound gratitude that after a rocky start in the early decades, the synod has provided consistent and generous support to its worker-training program in general and to its seminary in particular.

To be more specific: the rationale that with synod approval has obtained for some time now is that, in general, a resident seminarian should pay the full cost of his room and board and one-third of his tuition. In practice, the student fee schedule, which is recommended by the Board for Worker Training and approved by the Board of Trustees, has never quite kept up with inflation and rising costs, so that there actually is some synodical subsidization in all three categories. For the 1987–88 school year the synodical cost to provide dormitory housing (exclusive of the original capital investment) is \$646. The room charge for a dormitory student in 1987–88 is \$610, or a synodical subsidy of \$36. Food costs in our cafeteria total about \$1,387 per student; the board being charged this year is \$1,120, or a subsidy of about \$267. The real “chunk,” however, comes in educational costs, where by the agreed-upon formula the seminary student is expected to pay one-third of the actual cost of tuition. The educational expenses (tuition) for the present school year amount to about \$4,922 per seminarian, of which the student is required to pay \$1,540 (31.3 percent). Adding that all together reveals that the synod is paying about \$3,685, or 52.9 percent of the cost of room, board and tuition of a resident seminarian.

Let us, however, note that room, board and tuition are not the only expense a seminarian has. For the average student it remains a very real challenge to come up with his “share” of the cost of preparing himself for the parish ministry. Needy seminarians are, by definition, an “endangered species,” but they are by no means a “vanishing breed.” The point to be noted in all this, student difficulties notwithstanding, is that the synod has been most generous in its support of those who are preparing for Kingdom work in the parish ministry. Such a synod has every right to indicate to its seminary what curriculum it is to offer and what sort of graduates the school is expected to provide.

We have already noted from the opening paragraph of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary’s *Catalog* that the seminary exists as a confessional school committed to preparing candidates for the parish ministry. The confessional aspect of our training program is not negotiable. It is mandated not by the synod but by the Word of God. No amount of support, financial or other, can change that. Should the synod, God forbid, lose its confessional sensitivity and become unfaithful to the Word, we would have to oppose its position and renounce its support. Recall that in 1867 resolutions were passed asserting the synod’s loyalty to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions—in opposition to and over the objections of German patrons and missionary societies that were very supportive of us but espoused the doctrinal indifference of the Prussian Union.

It is a singular blessing of God that for almost a century and a quarter now the synod and the seminary faculty and students have shared a common bond of unity in doctrine based on the Word. That the seminary faculty and administration truly agree with the confessional stance of the synod as asserted in the *Catalog* is evident in a paragraph from the seminary’s 1978 *Self-Study*. That document states:

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is a confessional school. As such it accepts Holy Scripture as the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God and recognizes the Confessions of the Lutheran Church as a true and correct exposition of that Word. Hence all the courses of the Seminary, the theoretical and practical as well as the vicarship program, are arranged to maintain a scriptural and confessional emphasis. This scriptural and confessional emphasis rules out the option of doctrinal picking and choosing by either faculty or students. Both are bound by the Word of God.

Such a program is in conformity with that which the Apostle envisioned when he directed Timothy: “The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tm 2:2).^{xvii}

A genuinely scriptural confessional stance, that is, loyalty to the Word, is worked by the Holy Spirit. Hence, it does not admit of negotiation. The type of program, however, and the practical preparation which a confessional seminary offers—that may indeed be determined by the supporting body.

Again, the opening paragraph of our *Catalog* clearly expresses the synod's wish in this matter. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is not to be “a school of religion furnishing opportunity to anyone for specialized study in various fields of theology,” but “the specific purpose of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is to offer theological training for men who desire to enter the public ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod or of churches within its confessional fellowship.”^{xviii}

Here too the *Self-Study* reflects the school's unquestioning agreement with and acceptance of that mandate from the synod. The *Study* declares:

If the church is to be true to her Lord's commission of making disciples of all nations, then the church's ministerial training program must be designed to produce men trained to preach the Gospel.

Since the Synod's primary need is for pastors, WLS has designed its program to train men specifically for the parish ministry. To be sure, this ministry is carried on under widely differing circumstances. There are parishes in rural areas, in suburban settings, in metropolitan areas and the inner city. In each case, however, these are types of the parish ministry.

Specific training for the parish ministry does not imply that WLS is oblivious to the fact that we live in an age of specialization. In addition to the parish ministry there is a host of specialized ministries: institutional ministries, social ministries, campus ministries, administrative ministries, world mission assignments, chaplaincies, as well as positions in synodical schools and area high schools.

The Synod has a need for these various ministries. The parish ministry, however, not only continues to be the primary need of the Synod and the basic form of the ministry, but experience has shown that the broad base of training for the parish ministry is also the best preparation for the specialized ministries. Such training serves as an ideal foundation for further training and specialization.^{xix}

Providing pastoral candidates remains our primary calling. It is a calling deeply rooted in our history. From the perspective of 125 years of history one looks back to the many places where things might have taken a different turn. One thinks of God-fearing men, committed to Scripture and imbued with the courage to renounce the unionistic patrons and mission societies that seemed so necessary to our support. One thinks of the unselfishness of men who were willing to give up their dreams of an American college in order to have a true worker-training school. One thinks of the consecrated wisdom of those who changed the language used in our educational institutions to the language needed in the congregations and who altered the curriculum at our schools to have it properly prepare men to serve in Lutheran parishes.

All of these, of course, were not just human decisions; they were guidance from a gracious God, who has brought us to the point where we can formally this year glorify him for 125 years of unflinching goodness to our seminary. With grateful hearts we thank him for the past. With confident and resolute minds we look to the future, committed to our continuing task of preparing pastors for the parish ministry. In all of this our prayer remains that of the Psalmist, “Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness” (Ps 115:1).

The Faculty of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary 1863–(1988)
(List has been updated to include the 59 men who have served through 2003.)

Eduard Moldehnke	1863-1866	Irwin J. Habeck	1966-1984
Adolf Hoenecke	1866-1870; 1878-1908	Siegbert W. Becker	1969-1984
Eugen Notz	1878-1902	John C. Jeske	1969-1995
August L. Graebner	1878-1902	Edward C. Fredrich	1970-1991
Gottlieb A. Thiele	1887-1900	Joel C. Gerlach	1971-1981
Reinhold Adelberg	1897-1901	Richard D. Balge	1971-2002
Johannes P. Koehler	1900-1929	Martin O. Westerhaus	1972-1995
August Pieper	1902-1941	David P. Kuske	1973-2003
John Schaller	1908-1920	Paul E. Nitz	1974-1997
Hermann E. Meyer	1915-1920	Armin J. Panning	1975-2001
Johannes P. Meyer	1920-1964	Ernst H. Wendland	1978-1986
William Henkel	1920-1929	Leroy A. Dobberstein	1982-1999
Gerhard Ruediger	1921-1924	James J. Westendorf	1982-
Frederic Brenner	1929-1940	John F. Brug	1983-
Max Lehninger	1929-1952	David J. Valleskey	1984-
August F. Zich	1931-1939	Wayne D. Mueller	1984-
Paul W. Peters	1939-1966	James P. Tiefel	1985-
Adalbert Schaller	1940-1952	Harold R. Johne	1986-1998
Edmund Reim	1940-1957	Alan H. Siggelkow	1991-
Carl J. Lawrenz	1944-1982	John M. Brenner	1991-
Hilton Oswald	1945-1960	Forrest L. Bivens	1993-
Frederic E. Blume	1952-1974	John P. Hartwig	1995-
Gerald O. Hoenecke	1952-1978	Mark G. Zarling	1996-
Arthur P. Voss	1954-1955	John D. Schuetze	1997-
Heinrich J. Vogel	1956-1982	John F. Korthals	1997-
Armin W. Schuetze	1958-1990	Daniel P. Leyrer	1998-
Martin J. Albrecht	1962-1985	Richard L. Gurgel	1999-
Wilbert R. Gawrisch	1965-1993	John C. Lawrenz	2000-
Martin W. Lutz	1966-1971	Paul O. Wendland	2001-
		Paul E. Zell	2002-

ⁱ *Catalog*, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 1987–88, p 3.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

ⁱⁱⁱ John Philipp Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, edited by Leigh D. Jordahl. (Sauk Rapids, Minnesota: Protes'tant Conference/Sentinel Printing Company, 1981), p 43.

^{iv} *The History of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary from 1863 to 1903*; unsigned German original probably by Dr. Adolf Hoenecke, translation by Professor Wilbert R. Gawrisch in this issue of the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, p 7.

^v *Our Synod and Its Work*, prepared and published by the Board of Education, Wisconsin Synod (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1947), pp 17–18.

^{vi} Hoenecke/Gawrisch, *op. cit.*, p 8.

^{vii} *Ibid.*, p 9.

^{viii} *Ibid.*

^{ix} *Our Synod and Its Work*, p 18.

^x Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p 121.

^{xi} *Ibid.*, p 122.

^{xii} *Ibid.*, p 130.

^{xiii} Erwin E. Kowalke, "An Evaluation of Our Present Ministerial Training Course," *Proceedings of the 1961 synod convention*, p 152.

^{xiv} *Ibid.*

^{xv} Hoenecke/Gawrisch, op. cit., p 11.

^{xvi} For a complete listing of the 47 men who have served or are serving on the seminary faculty see above.

^{xvii} *A Self-Study of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary* (Mequon: WLS, May 1978), p 9.

^{xviii} *Catalog*, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 1987–88, p 3.

^{xix} *A Self-Study of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary*, pp 8–9.