

Shepherds under Christ: The Training of Confessional Lutheran Pastors In Our Time and in Our Places

A report of the Global Theological Education Commission (GTEC) to the Triennial Convention of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) in Seoul, South Korea, June 6–8, 2023.

About this report: The Global Theological Education Commission of the CELC has discussed the base-line requirements for a seminary that trains Confessional Lutheran pastors in the XXI century. Throughout the process we have learned more about our own programs and the programs of our partner church bodies around the world. It is our hope that this report will help us all to pursue excellence in theological training, to hold each other accountable, and to encourage, support, and spur each other on in this blessed work. This is meant to serve as a model for best practices, not a prescription for all our programs. This document expresses many ideals that, for a variety of reasons, are not easy, or always possible, to implement.

This report uses the nineteenth century division of theology into biblical theology, historical theology, systematic theology, and practical theology. This division is not only customary in CELC seminaries, it also helps conceptualize the main approaches to theology. That being said, *The Book of Concord* always uses “doctrine” in the singular to emphasize that doctrine is a singularity and that the articles of the faith form one interconnected “body of doctrine” (*corpus doctrinae*). In the same way, exegetical, historical, systematic, and practical theology are interconnected. They can never be done in isolation from another. Moreover, the biblical, historical, and systematic theology ultimately all lead to practical theology.

Classical Lutheranism rightly defined theology as a God-given “practical habit” (*habitus practicus*) that needs to be cultivated through prayer, meditation on God’s Word, and the cross (2 Corinthians 3:5–6; 2 Timothy 2:24; Psalm 119). It is God-given because it is not something that humans can achieve on their own. Theology is habit, aptitude, or capability that is always connected with trust (*fiducia*), not a mere knowledge (*notitia* or *scientia*) that even an unbeliever can acquire (James 2:19). Theology is practical not theoretical. In other words, its chief purpose is the salvation of sinners through the proper application of law and gospel (John 20:31). Nevertheless, prayer, meditation, and the cross are still necessary because they are the crucible in which theology is cultivated, honed, and internalized in the believer.

Biblical Theology

Need for Biblical Theology: The Word is everything. *Sola Scriptura!* In Confessional Lutheran training programs, biblical theology receives much room in the curriculum. At the seminary the whole Bible will be studied in overview courses or in exegetical courses. The Scriptures will not be studied as literature, but as the living Word of God. The Scriptures will be studied with the salvation of souls in view.

Hebrew and Greek: Seminary instructors will need to determine the goals of language study in their program. Is the goal exegesis in the original languages? Is it the ability to read exegetical commentaries with more understanding? The stated goals will inform the length and nature of the training. Some of our institutions have used communicative language training (CLT) effectively, especially at the beginning of the training. Many of our programs distinguish between a BDiv degree (with biblical languages) and BTh degree (without biblical languages). The languages are desired and encouraged, but not required of all. The commission feels that training in the biblical languages is an area where collaboration among us would be wise and resourceful in order to achieve the highest capabilities with the biblical languages as possible. Continuing education will enable our pastors to preserve and increase their ability to read God's Word in the original languages.

Hermeneutics, Canon, and Textual Criticism: The commission sees biblical hermeneutics, canon, and lower textual criticism as a vital part of theological education. Hermeneutics specifically needs to be taught in "hermeneutics courses" and modeled in every overview and exegetical course. Each seminary program will decide where the following aspects of hermeneutics need to be addressed: principles and issues in biblical hermeneutics, the genres of Scripture, Spirit-intended meaning (e.g., the historical-grammatical sense, typology, etc.), the relationship between the Old Testament and New Testament, and modern literary and historical approaches to the text. The commission sees hermeneutics as a vital area for careful study among all our theological educators, in our programs and within the CELC.

Overview/Survey Courses/Isagogical Courses: In overview courses, students will learn the background and major themes of each biblical book. They will see how each book fits into God's plan of salvation and how it connects to the Lord Jesus Christ. Throughout the Scriptures, students will learn to see, appropriate, and apply God's messages of law and gospel.

Exegetical Courses: Confessional Lutheran training programs have historically studied these parts of the Bible in-depth: Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah, the Gospels, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, the Pastoral Epistles. Context will help educators choose which books will be most helpful to future pastors and the people they will serve.

Historical Theology

Need for Historical Theology: Lutherans have a unique approach to church history that is distinct from other secular historians and church historians from other traditions. This approach is shaped by the following: theology as the proper object of historical theology, the distinction between the hidden and revealed will of God, a biblical conception of God's providential work in history, same-time saint and sinner (*simul iustus et peccator*), and an amillennialistic view of history. In contradistinction to the notion of doctrinal development, Lutherans also maintain that all articles of the faith are contained in the Bible and are fully formed therein. Even though there is no development of doctrine, correct and incorrect formulations (i.e., explications or articulations) of doctrine have developed as new questions have arisen in the life of the church. Finally, historical thinking not only plays a pivotal role in historical theology and biblical theology, it facilitates a more prudential systematic theology and practical theology as well.

Foundations for Historical Theology: Sound historical theology rests on a number of foundations. First, the church historian recognizes that history is more than just facts and dates. It is the art of interpreting the past. This art has had its own history and philosophies associated with it. Second, a knowledge of world history is of great importance. Not only are the events of the Bible and the church situated within world history, systematic theology and practical theology cannot properly apply God's Word without a contextualized understanding of their hearers. Third, no age is free of philosophies and worldviews. The study of the history of philosophy can help church historians explain how particular formulations of doctrine developed. It can also help systematic and practical theology be aware of its own biases and presentism when applying God's Word to those in their age. If possible, CELC pre-seminary students are encouraged to study historiography, world history, and the history of philosophy before entering seminary. CELC seminary professors are also encouraged to cultivate these foundational disciplines among their seminarians for the purpose of sound historical theology.

Classification Lutheran Confessions, World Religions/Cults, and Denominations: The Lutheran Confessions may be classified either as systematic theology or historical theology in the seminary curriculum. If they are taught as systematic theology, the historical context of the Confessions must not be ignored. If they are taught as historical theology, they must not be taught with a dynamic or historicizing approach. Our Lord himself said all Christians can know the truth, and Peter explains that all are called to confess that truth in the context of their various vocations when the need arises (John 8:31–32; 1 Peter 3:15). For this reason, all Christians are called to make a *quia* (not a *quatenus*) subscription to the confessions of faith that they make. The Lutheran Confessions are the norm for the doctrine to be confessed by all pastors in the Lutheran Church. World religions and denominations are usually treated under systematic theology because their confessions and teachings are being stressed, albeit their histories are also addressed.

Church History Content Requirements: It is recommended that CELC seminaries have a general survey of Ancient & Medieval Church History, Early Modern Church History, and Modern Church History. In addition, the commission suggests that seminaries have one or more historical courses that are more limited in scope but more penetrating in analysis. The former will ensure that seminarians have a basic understanding of the broad sweep of church history. The latter will ensure that seminarians have an opportunity to practice the craft of history themselves so that they can continue honing their historical consciousness and skills.

Local Context History Course: A course should be dedicated to the history of each seminary's own church body and the Lutheranism of that region. This course should also address how their own church body and regional Lutheranism fit into the religious and secular history of their corner of the globe. Such a course will help seminarians understand the ethos of their church and their communities. This in turn will help them better evangelize and care for the souls in their immediate locale.

Unique Features of the Different Historical Theology Programs: Each CELC seminary should regularly reevaluate their historical theology curriculums to meet the spiritual needs of the times and their specific locales. One of the ways that some of the CELC seminaries do this is by offering a course on modern theologians. This helps Confessional Lutheran students become aware of the pitfalls of the chief nineteenth and twentieth century Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox theologians that are so influential today.

Systematic Theology

Need for Systematic Theology: Dogmatics/Systematic Theology is of vital importance for two reasons. First, it builds on biblical and historical theology to confess the truth of Scripture to our current age for the purpose of saving souls. Second, we cannot have a unity of faith without doctrinal agreement, which can only be discerned by sound systematic theology. Since the only way this unity can be maintained is by the grace of God through sound systematic theology, a careful training of pastors in all the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures is of vital importance for preserving this blessed fellowship into the future. Unity in doctrine is a great blessing enjoyed within the CELC.

Curriculum: The doctrines of Scripture are presented and studied in a systematic way. However, we always want to be careful that there is no real separation between the areas of Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology. Starting with the so-called Prolegomena (inspiration and authority of Scripture, nature of theology) we teach Theology (God's attributes and nature, the Trinity; creation and preservation of the universe), Anthropology (man and sin), Christology (the person and work of the Savior), the work of the Holy Spirit (the order of salvation), means of grace, ecclesiology, church and ministry, and Eschatology (the last things). To be sure, this overview is only one example of how the material can be presented (e.g., loci method, synthetic method, analytical method, etc.). False doctrines need to be mentioned and evaluated in the light of the inerrant biblical word (theses and antitheses). Helpful study material can be found in the dogmatics notes used by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, in Francis Pieper (*Christian Dogmatics*), Adolf Hoenecke (*Evangelical-Lutheran Dogmatics*), Elling Hove (*Christian Doctrine*), Daniel Deutschlander (*Grace Abounds: The Splendor of Christian Doctrine*), Lyle Lange (*For God So Loved the World*) or other sound Lutheran books teaching biblical doctrine. Courses on the Lutheran Confessions will include the history, canon, text, and content of the Creeds, Augsburg Confession, Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Smalcald Articles, Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Catechisms, and Formula of Concord. Courses on apologetics and theological ethics might be included in the study or could be taught as additional classes depending on local necessities and opportunities.

Relationship between the Bible, the Lutheran Confessions, and the Church Fathers: *The Book of Concord* calls the Sacred Scriptures the only rule and norm of doctrine (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Rule and Norm). God's Word is the only source of theology because it alone is inspired, inerrant, authoritative, clear, sufficient, powerful, and life-creating (2 Timothy 3:16; Psalm 119:105; Luke 16:29–31; Romans 1:16; Genesis 1:3). The Sacred Scriptures are also called the "norm that norms" (*norma normans*), whereas the Lutheran Confessions are called the "norm that is normed" (*norma normata*). While *The Book of Concord* is not a source of theology, the Bible is to be taught in accordance with *The Book of Concord* by Lutheran teachers (Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 1:355–56). This is because believers actually can know the truth (John 8:31–32), are called to confess that truth (1 Peter 3:15), and need some formula or symbol to convey that confession of the truth. Of course, seminarians will need to carefully study the Lutheran Confessions before they can confidently make a *quia* subscription to *The Book of Concord* and use it as a norm in their teaching of the Scriptures. The church fathers are neither the norm that norms or the norm that is normed. However, the church fathers (especially the Lutheran fathers) are a great value to theology. They can serve as witnesses to the clarity of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:15); spiritual mentors (1 Corinthians 4:15; 11:1; Hebrews 13:7), theological dialogue partners, and aids against private interpretations of Scripture and presentism.

Practical Theology

Introduction: Everything in the theological training of pastors is leading to practical theology; theology's goal, ultimately, is to rescue sinners from sin, death, and hell and to preserve them in the faith and equip them for lives of service until they reach their heavenly home. The pastor is the spiritual leader of the flock entrusted to his care. Using the means of grace entrusted to him (the gospel in Word and sacrament), the pastor leads Christ's people in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. The pastor must oversee, lead, and manage the family of God. For this he needs training in leadership, administration, and communication. The pastor must also equip and work with other called workers and leaders so that the church of God can function in the areas of missions and evangelism, Christian service in the church and world, Christian education, true worship of the Lord, and the pastoral care of individual members. The practical theology courses will be designed to equip pastors to serve in these ways.

Leadership, Administration, and Communication

About Leadership: Leadership is a set of behaviors through which someone (a leader) helps people in an organization to assess the situation, articulate goals, and create and carry out plans for achieving those goals. Leadership is a skill that can and must be learned. It can be taught and caught, but it is best learned in the school of experience.

Leadership Curriculum: By the time students begin their theological training at the seminary, they have observed various leaders in home, church, and society. Perhaps they have experienced situations in which their vocations called for leadership. If possible, they have taken pre-seminary courses in the humanities and social sciences. At a confessional Lutheran seminary where the instructors have served as pastors, the following components help students grow in the area of leadership. First, the study of the Scriptures changes people from the inside, impacting their thinking, motivations, passions, character, and values. These are vital for faithful pastoral leadership. "He is like a tree planted by streams of water, whose leaf does not wither. Everything he does prospers" (Psalm 1). Second, in all courses, instructors are encouraged to share their personal leadership stories in the courses they teach. While this component is not coordinated, it is powerful. Instructors are encouraged to make spiritual leadership a significant component in courses that lend themselves to it. Leadership is something seminaries will want to track in their curriculum mapping. Third, a time of vicarship or internship under a supervising pastor in a local congregation provides a model of pastoral leadership and opportunities to grow in the area of leadership. Under a supervising pastor, the vicar learns faithfulness, mission-mindedness, culturally appropriate interaction (professionalism), ministry skills, care of souls, and the modeling of Christianity. Over time the vicar is given more freedom to propose initiatives and to work with others to carry them out. Finally, the curriculum may include a course or courses dedicated to the study and discussion of leadership. The general pastoral theology course and the pastoral epistles build on that foundation and prepare the students for pastoral leadership in all areas of practical theology. Topics may include biblical stories that illustrate leadership concepts, a history of the development of leadership theory paradigms, charisma (caring for people and having something important to say to them), challenging the status quo, team building around a negotiated vision, the relationship between visionary and integrator, cross-cultural leadership teams, and leadership opportunities in our church body.

In cross-cultural settings, expat instructors must recognize that leadership is a function of culture in terms of how it is carried out. Leadership will be more direct or less direct depending on cultural norms. Expat instructors may give people from different cultures insights into the expat's understanding of leadership, and that may provide a helpful backdrop for cross-cultural sharing. Expats can make a case for spiritual leadership and use the Bible as a resource for case studies (good and bad) that illustrate spiritual leadership. The goal of the expat instructor, however, is to help the people he serves with to understand and describe their own ways of serving as effective leaders.

Many people dislike their job because their immediate supervisor tries to lead by barking orders and criticizing performance. In the church, a pastor who has received little training in the area of spiritual leadership is more likely to act like the king of the congregation rather than its spiritual shepherd. Leadership often does not receive sufficient attention in the seminary curriculum. Pastors may suffer under this deficiency for many of their first years in ministry.

When pastors imitate the Good Shepherd, the sheep, guided by the word of God, will be able to love, honor, and respect their leaders in the church (Hebrews 13:7). Only when the clergy and laity work together in love will the body of Christ work as one in the mission of God (Ephesians 4:11-16).

About Administration: Spiritual leadership and administration are two different things. In most circumstances, the congregation the pastor should not serve in the roles of chairman, financial secretary, or treasurer. At the same time, the pastor will provide spiritual leadership for those who do. To do this effectively, the pastor will need an understanding of financial and project management systems.

About Communication: Communication lies at the very heart of practical theology. The ultimate aim of theology is the application of the means of grace to human beings for the purpose of effecting their salvation. Some implications of this are as follows: First, God has only promised to create faith and communicate grace through his Word in oral, written, and sacramental forms which are received by faith through the human senses (e.g., ear, mouth, etc.). Second, one human person normally applies the means of grace to another because human beings cannot convert themselves and are blind to their faults (Romans 10). Third, the one caring for the soul of another (*Seelsorger*) not only needs to know the Sacred Scriptures but also the individual that is being served to properly care for their soul. While the Scriptures are the only source of theology, the law and gospel that need to be applied always depend on the proper diagnosis of the specific law a person needs to hear to be killed in a particular historical situation and the specific gospel that that same person needs to hear in that situation to give them life. Fourth, cross-cultural communication is not only important for foreign missionaries. It has become increasingly important for indigenous pastors as countries become more multicultural. Fifth, the pastor is at the center of a large communication network in the local parish.

Communication Curriculum: It is therefore critical to not only train pastors well in communication, but also to give them the tools to continue to develop and improve their skills throughout their ministries. This can be done either within the traditional practical theology curriculum or in communication specific courses. Courses in communication include subjects such as conflict management, organizational communication, public

relations, persuasion, leadership, decision making, event planning, and utilization of mass media. Seminarians are instructed in strategies and principles for interaction with the wider public, management of organizational systems within the congregation, and interpersonal communication with individuals both inside and outside the church. Assisting a pastor in the development of better communication skills across a broad spectrum facilitates better outcomes across virtually every aspect of practical theology.

Missions/Evangelism and Christian Service

Missions and Evangelism: In Matthew 28:19–20, Jesus Christ commissioned his church to make disciples from all nations by baptizing and teaching. He likewise tells his church in Mark 16:15 go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. In 2 Timothy 4:5, St. Paul tells Timothy who was serving in Ephesus to do the work of an evangelist. Whether it be a foreign land or the backyard, the church is charged with the privilege of conducting mission work and evangelizing until the Lord comes again which could occur at any time.

Until then how can unbelievers call on the name of the Lord and be saved without believing in him? How can they believe without hearing of him? How can they hear of him without a preacher? How can a preacher come to them unless he is sent? God's answer to these questions are his under-shepherds, missionaries and pastors, whom he calls through his church to publicly conduct mission work and evangelize on her behalf (Romans 10:13–15; Augsburg Confession XIV). Faith can only be created in a person's heart through hearing the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17) and Holy Baptism (Acts 2:38–39; 1 Peter 3:21).

Much can be learned from modern missiology and evangelism studies. However, revivalism, decision theology, and church growth methodology, etc. must be rejected. Pre-evangelism and Christian service certainly play a key role in facilitating opportunities for mission work and evangelism. But mission and evangelism, strictly speaking, consist of preaching the gospel, baptizing, and teaching.

It must also be noted that mission work and evangelism is rarely accomplished without a gospel-motivated and equipped laity (2 Kings 5:2–3; Romans 16:3). While the priesthood of all believers is not divinely called into the public ministry, the laity are called to support their called workers in this endeavor with their private service (i.e., private use of the keys), various vocations, and spiritual gifts. This royal priesthood especially does this by always being prepared to give a defense for the hope they have (1 Peter 3:15) and by proclaiming the excellencies of him who called them out of darkness (1 Peter 2:9). The holy ministry and the priesthood of all believers were created to complement (not supplant) each other in the body of Christ and to work symbiotically for the advancement of the kingdom of God (Ephesians 4:4–16; 1 Corinthians 12:12–31).

Missions and Evangelism Curriculum: CELC seminaries typically address missiology and evangelism in one to two courses, field work, and vicarages. One seminary even has mission and ministry workshops to train and inspire seminarians for mission and evangelism.

About Christian Service: Christian service or *Diakonia* is one of the things the church does. All Christians, as members of the priesthood of all believers, are certainly called to privately serve their neighbor with mercy and compassion in the sphere of their various vocations. Luther makes this clear in his explanation of the second table of the law, the table of duties,

and his writings on Christian service. The apostles also recognized the need to publicly perform acts of Christian service, mercy, or compassion on behalf of the church when they called for the establishment of the diaconate (Acts 6). Moreover, such charitable acts especially for those in need often dovetail with mission/evangelism.

To be sure, government regulation has limited some of the traditional avenues of Christian service. The Social Gospel movement confuses Christian service with the gospel and thus fails to recognize that dispensing the means of grace (i.e., the preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments) is the chief task of the church. Christian service also does not make the church, church, because only passive righteousness makes the church, church. Nevertheless, Christian service is a necessary fruit of those who have been declared passively righteous through the gospel because authentic Christian faith inevitably needs to express itself in love (i.e., active righteousness). After all, human beings were created to be helpers to one another. For this reason, Christian service should be addressed in CELC seminaries' practical theology curriculum. This typically occurs within the general pastoral theology course and mission/evangelism courses.

Education

Need for Education in the Church: In the Great Commission, Jesus commands that we teach his disciples to observe all things he has commanded (Matthew 28:19-20). In the Old Testament, the Lord decried the condition of his people: "My people die because they lack knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). It is God's will that believers continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Education in society and in families is important. Education in Christian families and in the church is vital for faith and Christian living. Lutherans are blessed to have a strong heritage in Christian education—for believers of all ages. Confessional Lutherans are blessed to have the Word of God as the authoritative instructor in every educational setting. The Word of the Lord is the subject of Christian education. We are the object. God Word gives us life. It transforms us. In Christian education, human reason has a ministerial role (2 Corinthians 10:5). The Holy Spirit is the master.

Need for Education Courses in Theological Training: Because every believer serves as a priest before God, declaring the praises of him who called him out of darkness (1 Peter 2:9-10), the ascended Lord Jesus provides pastors and teachers who can teach them and equip them for lives of service (Ephesians 4:11-12). Because overseers in the church must be "apt to teach" (1 Timothy 3:2), education courses are needed to test and cultivate this aptitude in pastoral students. As the spiritual head, the pastor is responsible for all the teaching that happens in the congregation. He will teach or at least oversee the teaching of all adults and young people. He will see to it that young people are properly taught the catechism in preparation for their confirmation vows and the reception of the Lord's Supper. He will see to it that adult prospects are properly instructed in preparation for the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. With input from the leaders and members of the church, the pastor will plan and carry out a curriculum of Bible study for the adults of his congregation. While the pastor will not teach all the children's classes, it is his responsibility and privilege to equip those who do.

Education Curriculum: Because Luther's Small Catechism is the time-tested textbook for teaching the Scriptures to youth and adults and for Christian discipleship in the Christian home, pastoral students will learn the principles of pedagogy and andragogy that will enable

them to teach the catechism effectively. The catechism was designed to help believers internalize their faith; it spells out the daily rhythm of the Christian life. Pastoral students will study the theory and practice of education, including classroom management and best practices in education. They will also learn the principles and best practices of adult learning. Knowing the importance of being knowledgeable themselves, they will pursue a lifetime of learning. At the same time, instructor knowledge by itself does not guarantee student learning will take place. Teaching is a series of good decisions on the part of the instructor that increases the likelihood that learning will take place. The education courses in a seminary curriculum are about making those good decisions for different age groups and for people with different learning styles and levels of knowledge. He will learn how to incorporate technology into the classes he teaches. As a part of the education curriculum, pastoral students will learn how to prepare and teach their own Christ-centered lessons on the books of the Bible. They will learn how to develop lessons that achieve knowledge goals, understanding/attitude/emotions goals, and skills/ability goals. They will learn ways of assessing whether those goals are being met. They will learn how to evaluate Lutheran teaching materials (for doctrinal and educational quality) that can be purchased or found online. In their teaching, as in their preaching, pastors will want to properly apply law and gospel to the hearts and lives of Christ's people. Jesus says to his under-shepherds, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17).

Preaching and Worship

Need for Lutheran Preaching: "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing comes by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). In the Bible, Jesus in the Gospels and Paul in his letters emphasized the act of preaching. Lutherans take for granted the importance and centrality of preaching and hearing God's word. As Martin Luther matured in his preaching practice and understanding, he established a theology of preaching that has become a hallmark of Lutheran practice and tradition. The most central theological commitment for Lutheran preachers has come from Luther's belief that every sermon needed to contain law and gospel and a focus on the theology of the cross. For people who are same-time saint and sinner (*simul iustus et peccator*), the Holy Spirit uses the law to empty them and show them their need for the gospel, terrifying them, putting the old creature to death, so that in the gospel of Christ they may find forgiveness and salvation. Therefore, Lutheran sermons are structured as a movement from the law to the grace of Christ, from an acknowledgment of sin to an awareness of God's unmerited favor.

Lutheran preaching is a proclamation of the name of the Lord as revealed in the Bible. With a high view of Scripture, the Lutheran preacher places a high value on preaching the text. Most Lutheran congregations follow the Church Year (e.g., the historic pericope or a three-year lectionary), and most Lutheran preachers choose to preach on one of the appointed texts. While Lutheran preachers may choose to preach topical sermons (e.g., a series of catechetical sermons), they are careful to make sure that topical sermons do not place mankind and his concerns at the center of the sermon, rather than God and his revelation. Lutheran preachers begin their sermon study with an exegetical study of the sermon text. They study the grammar, context, genre, and historical setting of that passage and they consider that text's place in the Bible and God's plan of salvation. As he does his text study, the preacher will be applying law and gospel to his own heart first. He may consult biblical commentaries and read the sermons of others who have preached on the text. Then, with his hearers in mind, he crafts a sermon to explain and apply it to them. In a Lutheran sermon, law and gospel are

clearly divided, and justification and sanctification are properly distinguished. In Lutheran sermons, sinful and dying preachers preach to sinful and dying listeners. Lutheran preaching emphasizes Christ for us, giving glory to the God of all grace. In willing response to God's grace and mercy in Christ Jesus, hearers are encouraged to offer their bodies as living sacrifices as they live lives of as priests before God (Romans 12:1-2).

Preaching Curriculum: Biblical theology courses, the biblical languages, and systematic theology courses provide a strong foundation for the preparation of Lutheran sermons. Specific courses on sermon-writing and preaching (homiletics) will prepare men to preach God's Word to God's people every Sunday, for festival services, and for occasional services like weddings and funerals. Homiletics courses will teach the sermon writing process and provide pastoral students with the opportunity to preach and be evaluated. Homiletics courses will help students to write and preach sermons on the various genres of Scripture. Homiletic courses will explore the various styles of sermons and provide seminarians the tools for evaluating current trends in homiletical theory and practice. One of the main goals of a vicar/internship program is that the student improves in the area of preaching. He will practice the sermon-writing process, developing the habit of doing the hard work of preparation, becoming comfortable in the pulpit, and honing his ability to preach God's Word to God's people. Throughout their years of service, Lutheran preachers seek to grow in the area of preaching. They will seek feedback from the people they serve. They will study preaching in their continuing education courses. Pastors will preach to each other at pastoral conferences and study sessions and sharpen each other with loving and constructive criticism.

Need for Christian Worship: In the New Testament, the triune God's life-giving presence is located wherever the new temple, Christ's body, the church can be found (Ezekiel 40ff; Matthew 18:20; John 2:19; Romans 12:5; Revelation 21:22). Christian worship is primarily sacramental (i.e., about what God gives to his believers). Christian worship is only secondarily sacrificial (i.e., about what believers give to God via their thank offerings [i.e., eucharistic sacrifices]). In public worship, the holy ministry publicly dispenses God's life-giving presence in Christ's stead to the royal priesthood via the means of grace. In response, all the living stones being built up as a spiritual house offer their eucharistic sacrifices of prayer, praise, and even their bodies as their spiritual worship (Hebrews 10:1-22; Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5). For this reason, Christian worship is a not a work-righteous propitiatory sacrifice that contributes to Christ's sacrifice as it is in Roman Catholicism. It is also not a means for forging unity where it does not exist like it is for the Ecumenical Movement. That said, Christian worship is a means for deepening and enriching the bond between those who are already agreed in doctrine and practice.

Since only Christ, humanity's true high priest, could fulfil the law and offer a sole-sufficient propitiatory sacrifice to make atonement for sin, there is no longer any need for the Levitical priesthood, its sacrifices, or Jewish law (Colossians 2:16-17). For the sake of distributing the salvation won at the cross, God wills that Christian worship consist of such things as Holy Baptism (Matthew 28:19), the use of the keys (John 20:22-23; 1 John 1:8-9), the reading of God's Word, law and gospel preaching of the full counsel of God (Acts 20:27; Romans 10:14; 2 Corinthians 3:6), creeds (1 Peter 3:15), and the Sacrament of the Altar (Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), prayer, praise, and thanksgiving (Matthew 6:9-13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Timothy 2:1-4) should be included as well. In addition, the church is to gather regularly for worship (Heb 10:25) and to worship decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Whatever God has not spelled out about Christian worship is adiaphora and therefore part of Christian freedom (contra the Reformed regulative principle of worship). But it is always important to remember that Christian freedom means that the Christian has been freed from sin, death, and the devil, so that he can now freely chose in love to serve the neighbor. Christian freedom is neither license nor autonomy. Martin Luther spells out this Biblical conception of Christian freedom in his *Invocavit Sermons* where he corrected Karlstadt's bullish and radical worship reforms. Even though some of Karlstadt's reforms were actually scriptural and historic, the Wittenberg church had not been pastorally prepared for them.

The Lutheran reformers chose in Christian freedom to retain purified versions of medieval worship forms which had their roots in the early church (Psalm 55:17; 119:62; 119:164; Luke 4:16; Acts 2:42; 3:1; 10:3, 9; 20:7; Augsburg Confession XXIV, 1–9; Apology XXIV, 1). They did this for a number of reasons. They found that these purified forms were still the best means available to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments to those in their day. They wanted to affirm that Lutherans were conservative (i.e., catholic) reformers not radical restorationists. In pastoral deference, they also sought to avoid unnecessary changes so as not disturb and confound the laity. In short, Lutheran worship is biblical and liberating. It is sensitive to the wisdom of the past and able adjust to the cultural needs of the present.

Christian Worship Curriculum: For this reason, CELC seminarians will be instructed about history of worship, liturgical theology, hymnody, conducting Lutheran worship (i.e., chief service, prayer services, and occasional services), the selection of church music (i.e., traditional and new), and necessity of pastoral prudence in liturgical matters which impact so much of congregational life. This is typically done in one to two courses in CELC seminaries. Like preaching, students will also need class time, fieldwork, pulpit supply, and vicarage opportunities to conduct Lutheran worship under the supervision of mentors who can provide helpful feedback.

Counseling

Pastoral care: Pastors serve the flock, not only in their preaching and teaching, but also in one-on-one ministry. This includes every member visits, interaction with members in their daily vocations, spiritual formation, pre-marriage counseling, and visitation of the sick and dying. Additionally, the pastor will seek after the straying, carry out church discipline, and meet the counseling needs of his flock.

Need for Counseling: It is no secret that there has been a dramatic increase in demand for competent counseling. This is due to the rejection of Christianity, the neglect of confession and absolution, the breakdown of healthy family structure, the pervasion of drugs, pornography, and a whole host of other factors.

Some pastoral counseling curriculums of the past tended to blur pastoral counseling and the counseling of the mental health practitioner. Fortunately, recent developments in pastoral counseling curriculum have tried to correct the tendency to blur the roles of the pastor and the mental health practitioner. They have also sought to reaffirm the essential role of pastoral counseling and the means of grace in the care of people with all their human qualities.

Curriculum: The goal of pastoral counseling is to apply the means of grace to a struggling individual's unique life experiences so that he can view himself and others in godly,

beneficial, and healthy ways. While pastoral counseling is a God-given ability, this ability is meant to be honed through prayer, meditation, and the cross (Psalm 119). Consequently, the pastoral counselor will also need to regularly reflect on the spiritual, mental, and physical struggles of a counselee so that he can properly apply the means of grace to that particular struggle.

To help seminarians start honing this pastoral counseling ability, a CELC seminary curriculum should address the following objectives: It should inculcate the fundamentals of pastoral counseling, expose seminarians to various pastoral counseling methods, cultivate various counseling skills in them (via role playing, etc.), and recognize local culture will determine many of the focal points of pastoral counseling.

Counseling situations to be examined include crisis counseling, marriage counseling, sexuality/gender counseling (e.g., live-ins, homosexuality, transgenderism), parent/child counseling, bereavement counseling, bioethical counseling, psychological/emotional counseling, and addiction counseling (e.g., behavioral counseling, substance abuse counseling).

The curriculum should address the integration of psychology into pastoral counseling as well. Moreover, it should distinguish between the vocation of pastor and the mental health practitioner (i.e., psychologist, psychiatrist, or counselor) by spelling out when a pastor should involve a mental health practitioner and what each of their roles should be when a mental health practitioner is involved.

Pastoral Counseling Courses and Training: The general pastoral theology course should spell out the fundamentals of the pastoral counseling. An entire course should then be dedicated to pastoral counseling itself. Some CELC seminaries have found it prudent to add an additional course that addresses psychology and its relationship with pastoral counseling.

Workshops can also help seminarians use role playing, etc., to put their skills into practice. When appropriate, seminarians can observe experienced pastors counsel at their field work and vicarage congregations.

Use of This Document

The members of the commission have met thirteen times to discuss the base-line requirements of theological education and to prepare this report. As we discussed the content of this report, we learned from and with each other about solid theological training. We learned more about each other and about the Lord's blessings to us, and as a result we became more closely knitted together in the body of Christ. Thank you for the opportunity to share this report at the Triennial Convention of the CELC. We welcome your reaction to this report and any additional thoughts you may want to share.

The members of the commission envision the following uses of this document. First, we believe this document provides us with many reasons to give thanks to the Lord. By his grace, the gospel shines brightly among us. In Christ, we have eternal hope. We are thankful for our partner church bodies around the world with whom we share unity of faith, doctrine, and practice. Second, we believe this document can inform the prayers of all our churches and members in the CELC. Let's pray for workers in all our churches. Let's pray for faithful

instructors and solid theological training programs to train them. A seminary program that trains faithful shepherds for the church is a real blessing to the church. Let's pray that the Lord will keep us faithful to him generation after generation. Third, we believe that this document can serve as a useful tool for evaluating and enhancing our theological training programs. As faculty and governing boards have ongoing discussions about their theological training programs, they are invited to reach out to our commission. We are eager to build our network of partnership and collaboration in this blessed work. GTEC recommends that the improvements to our programs be incremental and constant. Open and frequent communication will facilitate such improvement. Fourth, we hope that this document will encourage the member churches of the CELC to see the need for the continuing education of their pastors, to encourage it, and to support it. There are many opportunities for such growth—in local settings, at our institutions and in the regions of the CELC—and we would do well to seize them. The work of theological education is not easy, but we are not alone. We are in this work together. May the Lord establish the work our hands for us. Yes, may he establish the work of our hands. *Soli deo gloria.*

Members of GTEC

Andrés San Martín Arrizaga, representing the Latin America Region

Angus K. F. Cheung, representing the Asia-Oceania Region

Thomas Nass, President of the CELC, advisory

Anthony Phiri, representing the Africa Region

Timothy Schmeling, representing the ELS in the United States and Canada

Holger Weiss, representing the Europe Region

Brad Wordell, representing the WELS in the United States and Canada, chairman