

## Sem Faculty Approves Specific Ministry Pastor Program Curriculum

The faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary has approved the curriculum for the Specific Ministry Pastor program, which is designed to provide pastors to address mission and ministry opportunities before The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.

The process of establishing the curriculum included conversations with parish pastors, mission executives and District Presidents.

"Getting input from the church at large was very important to us," said Dr. Douglas Rutt, Dean of Distance Learning at Concordia Theological Seminary.

After having opportunity to give input and feedback in a special focus session with the SMP Curriculum Committee, Nebraska District President Rev.

Russell Sommerfeld commented, "The curriculum utilizes the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions to form Lutheran pastors within the context of mission and ministry so that they may be sound in doctrine and missional in approach."

Dr. Arthur Just, Professor of Exegetical Theology, described SMP as a reflection of ongoing growth and study at CTS. "This new curriculum is really all about Jesus Christ and how the mission of God begins and ends with Him," Just said.

Fundamental to the SMP curriculum is a focus on mission in the student's particular context. SMP is open to men in a variety of ongoing ministry and mission situations who find themselves in a position of congregational leadership.

"That's probably the least understood portion of the SMP program" noted Rev. Bill Johnson, Educational Technologist at CTS. "Candidates for the SMP program are already in positions of leadership with a District or congregation that seeks to call them as a pastor, an assistant or associate pastor or as a mission developer for planting a daughter congregation. The church raises up leaders from within. It ends up being a very natural process."

Concordia plans to offer the first course of the SMP program, Confessing Christ in Today's World, in September of this year.

Additional information about the SMP program and the application process can be found on the seminary website, [www.ctsfw.edu/academics/](http://www.ctsfw.edu/academics/). □

## LCMS VP Named Finalist in CFO Awards Competition

Thomas W. Kuchta, vice president finance/treasurer of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, was named a finalist in the *St. Louis Business Journal's* first-ever CFO of the Year awards competition held June 5.

More than 70 nominees were considered for five categories:

- Public companies
- Large private companies
- Medium private companies
- Small private companies
- Nonprofits

The *St. Louis Business Journal* named three finalists in each category. Kuchta competed in the nonprofit category.

"I am honored to be among the finalists in this competition," says Kuchta. "But more importantly, I am so grateful for the opportunity through this process to tell others about the work of the church, not just here in St. Louis, but across the country and the world."

Kuchta, 66, is serving his third term as vice-president finance/treasurer of the Synod.

He oversees the church's \$100 million operating budget and serves on the boards of directors and investment committees of many LCMS entities, including:

- Lutheran Church Extension Fund
- LCMS Foundation
- Concordia Plan Services
- Concordia University System
- LCMS Board for Pastoral Education
- Concordia Publishing House

In addition, Kuchta sits on the board of directors for Lutheran Housing Support, an independent LCMS nonprofit corporation that provides a special church ministry by working to stabilize communities and strengthen neighborhoods churches across the country by providing decent, affordable homeownership for low- to moderate-income families. Kuchta also serves on his home congregation's stewardship and finance committee. Kuchta and his wife, Ilona, are members of Hope Lutheran Church-St. Ann. □

## 'We Believe' Selected as 2010 Youth Gathering Theme

Planners of the 2010 National LCMS Youth Gathering have announced its theme: "We Believe." The event is set for July 17-21 in New Orleans.

The 2010 Gathering theme is based on John 20:31: "But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

"One of the things that youth always say about the Gathering

aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Gathering planners also announced changes to participant registration guidelines, including lowering the age of eligibility to 14 (from 15 for past Gatherings), and allowing more adult leaders to accompany youth groups.

"Our goal is to provide opportunities for incoming [high school] freshmen to experience the Gathering," Mark Kiessling, Gathering program director,

must be at least 14 years old or entering their freshman year of high school at the time of the Gathering, and may not be over the age of 21 by that time.

The adult-to-youth ratio in congregational groups at the 2010 Gathering is basically being increased by one adult for every six youth.

The 2007 National LCMS Youth Gathering in Orlando included some 27,500 participants from about 1,800 congregations. A

### THE NATIONAL LCMS YOUTH GATHERING NEW ORLEANS, LA

is how much it means to encounter other students who 'believe like I do,'" said Dr. Terry Dittmer. He is Director of LCMS District and Congregational Services - Youth Ministry, which has sponsored all 11 National LCMS Youth Gatherings held since 1980, including the 2010 event.

"'We Believe' is a wonderful corporate expression of our faith in Jesus Christ," Dittmer continued, "especially as we focus on the creed and our confessions [and] as we take that faith to the New Orleans community in Word, celebration, service, witness, and fellowship."

This will be the third National Gathering to take place in New Orleans, following others there in 1992 and 2001. The 2007 Gathering was first planned for New Orleans, but then moved to Orlando in the



Photos by Nathan B. Harrmann

said of the lowered age requirement. "Planners will give special consideration when developing workshops and program content to meet the unique needs of these younger students."

To register for the 2010 Gathering, youth participants

first-time concurrent Adult Gathering there drew more than 250.

Kiessling noted that an Adult Gathering is not being planned for 2010, since the 2007 Adult Gathering "was hosted with the specific intent of celebrating the 30 years of Gathering planning."

Registration for the "We Believe" Youth Gathering opens in the fall of 2009. For more information, contact DCS Youth Ministry at 800-248-1930, Ext. 1155.

The Gathering Web site at <http://2010.lcmsgathering.com> provides interactive

"glimpses" of New Orleans, featuring LCMS members in the Southern District and information that Kiessling said "helped the LCMS decide that New Orleans is the best home for the 2010 Gathering." □

## The Lutheran Witness wins four ACP awards

*The Lutheran Witness*, the official magazine of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, won four awards in this year's Associated Church Press religious journalism competition for work done in 2007. The awards were announced at the ACP's annual convention, April 20-23.

*The Lutheran Witness* received the following awards in the ACP's "Best of the Christian Press" competition:

- First-place Award of Excellence in the "Feature Article: News Service/Newsletter/Web site" category for "New Life in Greensburg," by Paula Schlueter Ross, which appeared on the magazine's Web site. A shortened version of the story — an update on the tornado-destroyed town of Greensburg, KS and Peace Lutheran Church there — also appeared in the November print edition. Ross is a writer with the Synod's Board for Communication Services.
- Second-place Award of Merit in the "Publication Web site" category for the magazine's online counterpart, [www.lcms.org/witness](http://www.lcms.org/witness), which was redesigned last year under the supervision of Becky Cummings, manager of Internet affairs. Cummings also is responsible for updating the site with new stories and photos each month.

• Third-place Honorable Mention award in the "Convention or Meeting Coverage: Magazine" category for "One Message: Christ," pre- and post-LCMS national convention stories by Roland Lovstad and James H. Heine that appeared in the June/July and August issues. Lovstad is a freelance writer from Perryville, MO, and Heine is managing editor of the magazine.

• Third-place Honorable Mention award in the category of "Personally Useful Article" for "Full House, Full Hearts," by Ross, which appeared in the May issue. The story focused on the adoption of five siblings from Ukraine by Jonathan and Mary Stahlke of Chicago.

The ACP is the oldest religious interdenominational press association in North America, with a membership of nearly 200 publications, Web sites, news services, and individuals and a combined circulation of several million. The organization works to support excellence in journalism as a means to describe, reflect and support the life of faith and the Christian community; it cooperates in educational and postal matters with religious press associations in the United States and Canada. □