



# LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN TSHWANE

## ◆ A Blind Student and the Light of the World: Reflections on 2024

In 2024, LTS welcomed a visually impaired student. This resulted in new experiences for both fellow students and lecturers. Lecturers had to start making voice recordings and provide additional material for the student to be able to study. He relies a lot on the help of his wife in preparing for tests and examinations, who reads the learning material to him. Exams were taken orally and answers were written down.

Yet, this does not stop the student from attending class and performing well in most of the courses. His wife is an administrator at the University of Pretoria and it is their dream to do campus ministry there.

In John 8:12, Jesus declares, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Christ, the light of the world came into this world at Christmas to save us from our sin by his death and resurrection. The almost blind student in a way reminds us of the condition we all suffer from: spiritual blindness. Like he cannot see, we are all spiritually blind by nature, unable to find our way to God. We all need Christ and His light.



### In this newsletter you will find:

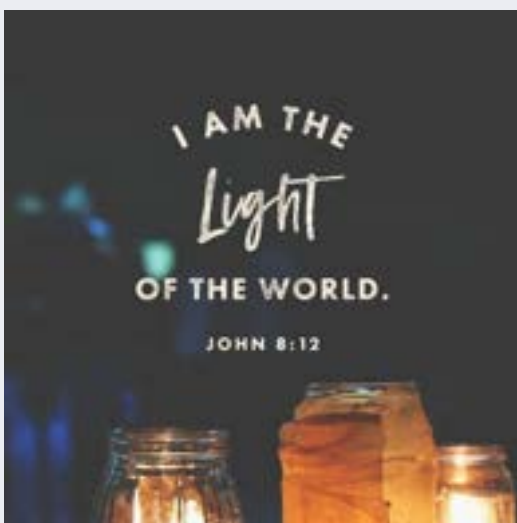


Four trip reports from visiting lecturers to LTS, the LTS rector attending another LLDP unit, and updates on further happenings at LTS...

This Advent season, we are reminded that God already in the Old Testament promised to send the Saviour to rescue us from blindness and give us light. In Isaiah 42:6-7 we read, “I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.”

We see from the verbs in this passage that it is God who acts. He opened our eyes in baptism so that we see and believe in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.

As we light a further candle each Advent Sunday, and the brightness of the light of the Advent wreath increases, may we be grateful that God has given us sight to see that he has sent the light of the world to cure us from our blindness and give us life eternal by His grace.



## TRIP REPORT - JOHN. T. PLESS

*August 16-31, 2024*

During this trip, I taught a course for 15 upper division students and a few guest pastors on “Advanced Homiletics.” Of all the courses I’ve taught at LTS since 2009, I must say that this was the most rewarding. The students were engaged with the readings and lectures and were diligent in the “workshop” format we used in crafting and preaching sermons for their peers. On my last day at LTS, the appointed Psalm for Matins was Psalm 40. Verse 10 particularly stuck out: “I have not hidden your deliverance within your heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.” This little gem from the Psalter really does summarize the work of our students in this course. They know that preaching does not speculate about God in His hiddenness but by open statement of the truth sets forth the word of the cross as the wisdom and power of God. God sends preachers for this very purpose. It was a joy to see them engage the preaching task with deepened understanding and vigor culminating in three days of a preaching practicum where each student preached on an assigned to text in class followed by discussion. This was remarkable as none of our students have English as their first language.

**Mission: “The LTS is a mission agency seeking to graduate multipliers for the Lutheran Church in Africa.”**

**Vision: “To provide quality confessional Lutheran formation.”**

## Prof Pless Trip Report Continued...

Thanks to generous donors in the USA, each student received personal copies of the textbooks for the course: *Lutheran Preaching? Law and Gospel in Proclamation Today* edited by Matthew C. Harrison and John T. Pless and *Notes on the Church Year* by John T. Pless. Units of instruction included:

- Ø Preaching in the New Testament (delivered August 15-16) via Zoom;
- Ø The Word in Words;
- Ø Hermeneutics for Homiletics;
- Ø Liturgical Context for Sermon: The Church Year;
- Ø Developing a Theme and Building an Outline;
- Ø Delivery: Christ FOR YOU;
- Ø Funeral Preaching;
- Ø Preaching in an Age of Fear Helmut Thielicke.

As I reflect on teaching this course, the words of the hymnist become my prayer for these students as they prepare to preach Christ alone in Africa:

“God of the prophets, bless the prophets’ sons;

Elijah’s mantle o’er Elijah cast.

Each age its solemn task may claim but once;

Make each one nobler, stronger than the last.

Make them apostles, heralds of Your cross;

Forth let them go to tell the world of grace.

Inspired by You, may they count all but loss

And stand at last with joy before Your face” LSB 682:1,5).

This trip was unique in that Mr. Kurt Paul hosted Dr. Nordling, Rector Hiestermann, and me for two days at his game reserve near the South

### *Prof Pless with a gift from the students*



African-Botswana border before we started classes. After the long trip (16-hour flight) from Atlanta to Johannesburg this excursion provided a wonderful opportunity to refresh and recharge.

I brought along several new books for the LTS library along with the first installment of my complete set of *Lutheran Quarterly*. I hope to bring the remainder of the set to LTS when I return in March.

I want to thank Rev. N. Shuttleworth and Rev. Siza Lugojobo for arranging a visit to the Apartheid Museum in Soweto on our free Saturday, August 24. In so many ways, the museum is a stunning testimony to a sad and painful chapter in South African history.

Rev. Shuttleworth is working on a PhD at the University of Pretoria. He decided to work on a dissertation on “Human Dignity in Lutheran Theology” growing out of a course on Theological Ethics he had with me at LTS a few years ago. We had the opportunity to visit regarding his dissertation and discuss some of the material he is reading from Bayer, Thielicke, and Meilaender. I also had the opportunity for continued discussion with Vicar Romeo Bienfait Safari who has applied for the MA program at CTSFW and hopes to join us in 2025.

I was interviewed by Mr. Lamont Bosman, a student at the Afrikaans Protestant Academy on contemporary Luther scholarship in North America. He is writing his thesis on Heiko Oberman (1930-2001) and was especially interested on how his work fits in with more recent American Luther research.

We enjoyed the hospitality of Dr. & Mrs. Heinz Hiestermann, Dr. and Mrs. Dieter Reinstorf, Rev. and Mrs. Gunter Hohls, and Rev. and Mrs. Nathan Mntambo for meals and conversation. We are grateful to Rev. Mintesinot Birru and the Ethiopian students who treated us to a delicious meal at the Ethiopian Restaurant in Sunnyside. A special thanks to the senior students who commissioned a sketch of me preaching. This drawing will be a reminder of a wonderful course but also a deep bond with the faculty, staff, and students at LTS. I am deeply grateful.

It is a joy to witness the many good things that are happening at LTS. Ground has been cleared for the construction of a new building that will include three classrooms, dormitory rooms, and a student commons. The library is well-organized and growing. LTS achieved accreditation status. While there are many challenges ahead, it is inspiring to see God’s work here as His lively Word goes forth.

I look forward to returning in March to teach Catechetics I. In the meantime, I invite you to join me in praying for our South African seminary and its faculty, staff, and students.

John T. Pless, M.Div.; D. Litt.

Visiting Professor

2 September 2024



# Trip Report - Prof. John Nordling

19 - 30 August 2024

I had the privilege of teaching Matthew (selections) for two weeks at Lutheran Theological Seminary, Pretoria, South Africa. Normally, instruction consists of 3 hours per morning, with time out for Chapel at 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. However, this year we were invited by Mr. Kurt Paul to visit his game farm on Monday - Tuesday of the first week; this meant that I had to deliver my first two lectures on Matthew via Zoom from Fort Wayne, even before getting on the plane. Hence, it was Wednesday of the first week before getting into the regular rhythm of instruction. Another instructor, Dr. John Pless (my colleague at CTSFW), taught a second three-hour class (Advanced Homiletics) to several of the same students in the afternoon. This time I taught 21 students in toto, from the following African nations: South Africa, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.



*Rev. Nathan Mntambo  
with Prof John Nordling  
and Prof John Pless*

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Gifts can be made online through the link <https://missioncentral.us/donation-form/?project=LTS%20Seminary%20Pretoria&reference=ZA0001-60604&id=IM0020ECXXXH000>

If writing a check, please make the gift to: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. In the memo line, write: ZA0001-60604: LTS Seminary South Africa. And send the gift to: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis MO, 63166-6861.

Or, to make a gift by phone, please call: 1-888-930-4438 and designate the gift to "ZA0001-60604: LTS Seminary South Africa".

# Trip Report continued...



So, while I presented my lectures from the Greek text of Matthew projected by an LED projector onto a screen, I decided not to make parsing a major priority this time but rather prioritized more substantial, hermeneutical issues that are associated with Matthew itself. Classes met in the Chapel where I projected the Greek text onto a screen and worked through selections of Matthew textually and exegetically.

(They were able to follow along in English bibles if they didn't know Greek very well.) I was able to supplement most lectures with PowerPoint lectures I used while teaching Matthew in Tanzania last August-September, so the students greatly appreciated the review and the pictures that attended each PowerPoint lecture. I also brought with me 28 copies of David Scaer's *Discourses in Matthew. Jesus Teaches the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2004) and handed these out to the students, and the pastors, on the first day.

Here are the assignments I expected from each student in the Matthew class:

9 quizzes (1 quiz per day)	50%
Assignment Sheet on Scaer (due over the first weekend)	20%
Class participation (attendance, questions)	10%
Content of Matthew Quiz (for Final)	20%
Total	100 pts possible

In addition to teaching, Rector Hiestermann requested my preaching at Chapel during the 10:00 a.m. services on 22 August (Eph 5:6-21) and 29 August (Eph 5:22-33). On Sunday 18 August Dr. Pless and I worshipped at the Lutheran congregation that assembles at the seminary Chapel (Rev. Nathan Mntambo), and again on 25 August where I preached for Trinity 13 on the theme, "And Who is My Neighbor?"

This time around I lived with Dr. Pless in renovated lodging on the seminary campus, taking lunch prepared for me and the students by Mrs. Emily Masehla. There were only two suppers where we were obliged to fend for ourselves. The first two days we were amply provided for by Mr. Kurt Paul at the game farm. Other days we were guests for dinner on 23 August (Dr. and Mrs. Dieter Reinstorf), 25 August (Nathan Ntambo and family, Hiestermanns), 28 August (Rev. Guenther and Hannah Hohls), and on Thursday 29 August Dr. Pless and I purchased the meat for an all-seminary braai to honor our students for their hard work.

# Trip Report continued...

In addition, we twice went to a local Ethiopian restaurant (once paid for by two appreciative Ethiopian students), and on Saturday 24 August we went to the Apartheid Museum in SOWETO, Johannesburg, with Pastors Shuttleworth and Lugojobo, followed by dinner at the latter's church. Once again, our South African hosts outdid themselves in providing for us and proving to be hospitable.

On the evening of Tuesday 27 August I read a paper which has been accepted for publication by Concordia Theological Quarterly, entitled, "Euodia, Syntyche, and the Congregation in Philippi." There were perhaps 30 auditors in attendance: all of the LTS students had been invited, plus perhaps 15 students from the college-age group at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Arcadia Street, Pastor Martin Paul, two professors from The Afrikaans Protestant Academe, Pretoria, and Prof. Pless. The paper took about 50 minutes to read, followed by another 20 minutes of spirited Question & Answer.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Gerald Schultz of Rathdrum, Idaho, for funding this venture, and to Dr. Hiestermann, for his hospitality and the invitation to teach Matthew this time around. This was my 14th teaching trip to South Africa this year, and probably the most rewarding so far. Dr. Hiestermann asked me to teach Acts the next time I come back, and I look forward to that. However, I cannot come any time soon: I will be on sabbatical (to work on Philippians) for the winter and spring quarters of the next two years (2024-24 and 2025-26). Possibly I could come in late-May early-June of the next year, or the year after that. It is vital that the LCMS continues to support LTS with our offerings and prayers, even as we respond to dramatic requests for assistance elsewhere.

Sincerely,  
Dr. John G. Nordling  
Professor of Exegetical Theology  
Concordia Theological Seminary  
6600 N. Clinton Street  
Fort Wayne, IN 46815  
USA



*Left: Profs Nordling and Pless at the Ethiopian restaurant. Right: During Confession and Absolution service at LTS*



# Mastering stressful situations - Report on the teaching assignment by Prof. Dr. theol. Christian and Dr. med. Anne-Katharina Neddens, Oberursel



This report on our teaching assignment at Lutheran Seminary Tshwane is titled “Mastering stressful situations”, which may seem strange at first glance. For us, our second stay at the seminary was anything but stressful: it was a great pleasure to meet the staff and teachers at the seminary again. Once again, we were able to move into the cozy guest apartment on campus and were helpfully supported in all matters. Some of the students we met two years ago were still on campus and were about to take their final exams. And it was nice to see how they had developed theologically and personally over the two years. We only really missed John Nkambule, whom we had quickly grown fond of and who unfortunately passed away unexpectedly shortly after our last stay.

## **HOW TO SUPPORT THE LTS:**

*IF YOU LIVE IN EUROPE:* Send it via Lutherische Kirchenmission (Bleckmarer Mission) e.V.: IBAN: DE09 2579 1635 0100 4239 00, BIC: GENODEF1HMN; (Spendenzweck „LTS“)

*IF YOU LIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA:* The Lutheran Theological Seminary in Tshwane is a registered Public Benefits Organization. Donations to LTS can be deducted according to **Section 18(a)** in the South African tax laws. Please see our website for details ([www.lts.ac.za](http://www.lts.ac.za)).

Account Holder: "Lutheran Theological Seminary in Tshwane NPC"

Bank: ABSA, current account no. 860510030 Branch Code: 632005 Swift Code: ABSA ZA JJ

Bank Address: ABSA Enterprise Business, Campus Building, 1102 Burnett Street, Hatfield, 0083 South Africa



## **Report by Dr. theol. Christian and Dr. med. Anne-Katharina Neddens**

No, the title that precedes our report refers to the teaching content that we dealt with in this year's intensive courses. Anne's course dealt with "Mental Illness and Pastoral Care" - and thus the question of how to cope with stressful situations. The course began with an overview of the most common types of mental illness, such as depression, anxiety disorders and trauma-related disorders. One focus of the lesson was the question of how mental illnesses can be recognized and what help and healing approaches can be offered. What possibilities does pastoral care offer and where are the limits of psychotherapy and pastoral care? Anne is a specialist in psychosomatics, psychiatry and internal medicine and runs a psychosomatic clinic near Frankfurt. She is also a lecturer at the Lutherische Theologische Hochschule Oberursel, at the Vinzenz-Pallotti University Koblenz and at Peking University China.

Christian's course was intended to provide an overview of the Formula of Concord, the last and most complex confessional document of the Lutheran Church. The title "Mastering stressful situations" also fits perfectly in this context. The Formula of Concord of 1577 was a real remedy for Lutheranism after thirty years of serious internal theological disputes that had done great harm to the Lutheran cause. After Luther's death and after the lost war with the emperor, the latter had wanted to impose a new religious law on the Lutherans in 1548, which was intended to end the Reformation. In this situation of uncertainty and external pressure, serious disagreements arose among the followers of the Augsburg Confession over the core of the Lutheran faith, the doctrine of justification.

The authors of the Formula of Concord were able to have a healing effect here by asking about the intention of the respective positions, by avoiding pointed phrases, and by eliminating misleading terminology from the doctrine. Thus, with God's blessing, it was actually possible to master this situation, which was life-threatening for Lutheranism towards the middle of the 16th century. Christian is a professor of Systematic Theology at Lutherische Theologische Hochschule Oberursel.

Right at the beginning of the trip, Christian was invited as a guest preacher for the joint mission festival of the three different-language Lutheran congregations and also gave the keynote speech on the topic of "Speaking to the Youth in Europe".

And of course, the morning devotions with the students were also part of the program again, two of which were led by Christian.

Our heartfelt thanks again go to Heinz, Mintesinot, Samuel Fuhrmann, and Fernando Huf for many good and interesting conversations, Rosemarie and Gustav for their loyal support, the kitchen team and the janitor for their friendly helpfulness, and the students for their dedicated cooperation.

It was a joy that Christian was able to meet his former assistant Tobias Schütze. Tobias has now submitted his doctoral thesis, teaches at the seminary, and is also doing his vicariate in Pretoria. And the fact that there was also an opportunity to go hiking in the Drakensberg mountains at the weekend was simply wonderful.

We were very pleased to see how well the accreditation of the seminary and the plans for the new building have progressed and wish the seminary, all its teachers, staff, and students God's blessing for everything they do.

# Dr Samuel R. Fuhrmann, Mekane Yesus Seminary, Ethiopia, & Seminário Concórdia of São Leopoldo, Brazil

07 – 15 October 2024



This report is intended to briefly describe the wonderful time I had in South Africa from October 06 to October 16. During this time, I had the privilege to teach the course **The Divine Service in Changing Contexts** at Lutheran Theological Seminary, Pretoria, South Africa.

Although I was able to be in the classroom with the students for only seven days, it was a good time for teaching and guiding students through theological reflections on the worship life of the church in light of Lutheran theology. The course explored the biblical foundations of worship as divine service, and offered an overview of the so-called ‘historic liturgy’. In addition, it emphasized Luther’s and the Confessions’ view on worship and looked at modern theological developments that resulted in the most predominant Christian worship practices today, accounting for Pentecostalism and other contemporary practices. Such practices were assessed through the lens of Lutheran theology.

In this course, I had 21 students from five different African nations, namely South Africa, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. As a result, the students originally came from different church bodies, which include LCSA (Lutheran Church of South Africa), ELCSA (Ev. Lutheran Church of South Africa), EECMY (Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus), and even the EOTC (The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church). The student who came from this last church body is named David Yilma. He told me that he got interested in Lutheran theology because of the Sola Scriptura Reformation principle. This was a reminder to me about how important it is that Confessional Lutheran Theology be made known to more people. Going back to the students in general, each of them, given their multiple cultural and ecclesial backgrounds, contributed to and enriched the course.

As far as the dynamic of the course is concerned, the sessions combined lectures, discussions, question-and-answer moments, and evaluation of the students. Following the teaching plan for the course, once the biblical Lutheran theological foundation was established, the students were guided to reflect on how contemporary practices and diverse cultural expressions in worship can be assessed through the lens of such a foundation. This aspect was accomplished more predominantly through lectures. As a less structured and less planned element of each session, the discussions were often started by the students' own reflection on the life of their churches on the side of the Lutheran theology of worship. Such discussions often moved on to a question-and-answer moment when I had the chance to guide them back to the theological foundation of the course to think of their questions and possible answers. As with the evaluation of the students, they had to take two minor tests and one final exam.

My interaction with the students in the classroom allowed me to perceive an important quality in the LTS' theological education. Although the students sometimes voiced different views on the topics of discussion, showing a certain theological diversity in the classroom, they all still seemed to know what the Lutheran theology taught at LTS says about the topic. Even when one or two students had questions about confessional Lutheran theology due to their own backgrounds, they knew what the theology and practice taught at LTS are. To me, this is a quality in LTS' theological education to be highlighted. It shows that its professors all teach the same Lutheran theology with Concordia. Thus, students see the same theology underlying the different disciplines they take.



*Front, left to right:  
Rev. Hanfato, Dr  
Fuhrmann, Rev Huf.  
Back: Dr Neddens, Dr  
Hiestermann*

I consider this point to be relevant because, in my experience in Africa, I have seen a lot of theological diversity among faculty members in a single school that easily creates confusion among the students. Sometimes students enter Lutheran Seminaries and graduate from them with little to no clear understanding of what Confessional Lutheran theology is. This does not seem to be the case with LTS. Through the comments, concerns, and questions raised by my students in the intensive course at LTS, I was able to identify the emphasis on Confessional Lutheran theology in the formation of the students. I mention this point because I consider this as part of my good experience in South Africa.

The good experience I had in South Africa was not only related to the classroom, though, but it began with the hospitality of my hosts. When I landed in Johannesburg on October 6, my countryman and friend Rev. Fernando Huf was there to pick me up. He took me to his house, where I stayed until October 16. During those ten days, I was able to enjoy the company of pastor Fernando and his lovely family. In addition to having a good time at their house, they took me to the Union Buildings (picture below), which I enjoyed a lot. They also took me to their congregation. It was a blessing to me to attend church with them at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Arcadia when we all heard a very instructive and comforting sermon by Rev. Musawenkosi Nathan Mntambo. My time in South Africa with the Hufs was a wonderful time for cultivating our friendship, enjoying fellowship, and learning about good hospitality from each of them. I am very grateful for their hospitality and the time together with them.





*Dr Fuhrmann preaching during Matins*

In addition to this, my good time in South Africa involved the opportunity to meet and share experiences with the faculty members and guest lecturers at LTS. Every day the group comes together for coffee time and lunch. Such time always follows the school's daily devotion held at 10:00 am. By the way, I had the honor to preach twice in the LTS chapel (on the 7th and the 15th Oct). It was a blessing to participate in those moments and to hear the beautiful voices of that community chanting and singing the Matins liturgy and hymns.

Back to the main point, after attending chapel I could join the group for coffee and had the chance to meet and share experiences with the LTS full-time faculty and the other guest lecturers, Dr. Christian Neddens and his wife Dr. Anne Neddens. Those were very good moments to share cross-cultural teaching experiences.

I was also able to enjoy good moments of fellowship and friendship in opportunities under the invitation of faculty members for meals together. Rev. Mintesinot Birru Hanfato invited us all, faculty members and guest lecturers, for a meal at an Ethiopian restaurant in town (on Oct 15). Rev. Dr. Dieter Reinstorf and Dr. Heinz Hiestermann invited the Hufs and me for dinner at their houses (on Oct 10 and Oct 13). Those were wonderful moments to build up friendships and enjoy the blessings of fellowship that we all have through our Lord Jesus Christ.

For all these reasons, I end this report with a word of thanks to LTS. Especially, I thank Dr Hiestermann for the opportunity to serve at the school and Rev. Fernando and his family for their hospitality. As I have already voiced to them, hopefully, I will have the opportunity to travel to South Africa again, to see both the old and the new friends – all brothers in Christ – who live in that wonderful country.

Dr. Samuel R. Fuhrmann  
Professor of Systematic Theology and Homiletics  
Mekane Yesus Seminary, Ethiopia  
& Seminário Concórdia of São Leopoldo, Brazil

## Accreditation and building plans Update

Getting accreditation is a three-step process. The first, and by far the most complex step is having the academic program approved by the Council of Higher Education (CHE). This has been achieved in July 2024. Their approval has been forwarded to the South African Qualifications Agency (SAQA) where the qualification (Diploma in Theology) will be registered. Once the qualification is registered, the registration of LTS with the Department of Higher Education can be finalized. We hope this will be completed in the first half of 2025.

The construction of the building project with new classrooms and a student dorm, which we hoped would have been completed in December 2024, has not even started. The municipal red tape remains a challenge. Please pray that we get building permissions soon, and that construction can start early next year.

## Coming Up @ LTS

- November 29, 2024: Closing of Academic Year
- February 3, 2025: Start of new academic year

### Rector attends LLDP unit

From November 11-22, Rector Hiestermann attended a second unit of the Lutheran Leadership Development Programme, an excellent program facilitated by Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne, Concordia Publishing House, and the International Lutheran Council.

The first week of class took place at CTSFW. Dr Jeffrey Skopak of Emmanuel Lutheran Church and School, Asheville, TN, taught **Strategic Planning and Task Management**. It was such a joy and privilege to hear him instruct in such an engaging way on how important it is to make a godly plan with a vision and a dream in the life of the church.

The second week of LLDP, Nov 18-22, was held at Concordia Publishing House in St. Louis. We rejoiced in receiving a warm welcome from President Jonathan Schultz, his colleagues, and the staff at CPH. This week's very practical course on **stewardship, budgeting, and financial accountability** was taught by Dr Roger Paavola, President of the Mid-South District of the LCMS. He brought several other instructors in to enrich his teaching, particularly Prof. Tom McCain, CPA, of Washington University. The course has given us many helpful tools for our ecclesial leadership. The days at CPH were fun, productive, and fruitful. Thank you to all involved in organizing this wonderful course!

*The LLDP participants at Concordia Publishing House*

