

*This interview was conducted by Natalie L. Gessert (Managing Editor) and Andrew Behrendt (Production Manager) of the Concord staff to gain insight from Luther Seminary's leadership regarding the issues raised from articles received for this issue.*

**CONCORD: Assess the effectiveness of the process of preparing students for ministry.**

RB: Well that's an easy one! We've gone through a listening process for almost a year and a half and our constituency in many areas considers our curriculum process to be of very high quality. So we tend to get quite high marks across the whole array of areas. So, when you talk about general impressions, like CYF, missional leaders, or vocational elements of vocation - a whole host of things listed out - the church recognizes... After having said that, then people will want to say that "here are some areas that need attention", and I can go into those as well, so we usually get high marks generally and then you'll get very nuanced, very interesting feedback on areas where we need to be doing a better job - certain growing edges. Some of those are specific to Luther, some of those are specific to the whole system.

PL: I would add a different perspective from a little different angle, totally agreeing with Rick, with what you've said about the feedback of our congregations, I'm amazed at how many people work at the preparation of our students, and it's not always seen. Even a student passing through sees one person's experience. But, not only faculty, faculty consultations about students, leadership, and then the variety of professional staff among students in one way or another. We can see student by student by student what is actually being formed and prepared and I want to say, in a certain way, it's exhausting. It's not the same as exhaustive - there's always more we could be thinking about and addressing, but it's very thorough and comes from a lot of different vantage points.

RB: Let me give you an example: 8 years ago people critiqued us and a lot of other schools saying that students weren't leaving here with imagination for mission. So, they challenged the language and so on. That language isn't used anymore about Luther. They would say that students have done Reading the Audiences and other things in the curriculum that have pointed them to a whole imagination for mission. That's the positive. Then they'd say, "but there are problems there." And some would say "it's a stewardship issue - they can't build capacity around their mission." That's one. There are all sorts of money or spiritual gifts issues. Others might say, "But you still have to love people into change." Often that vision for mission projects massive change, therefore, builds anxiety in the system, and leaders, even though they have a missional vision, if you can't love people into that it blows up and actually be destructive. Others would talk about business practices that are students need a much better sense of budget, of HR, how to organize change, even bureaucratically how to move an organization from point A to Point B today in a very complex world - and the church is a very complex organization. So those are things you might say that all the people who put time and energy into the curriculum is amazing. We've achieved some things that are recognized in the system and at the same time it's like a moving target, raising up new issues that need to be addressed. And it's constant, because any problem in the church always goes back to the seminary - it's always our fault. Either what we're doing right or doing wrong - so you will hear this for the rest of your life. It's like your parents. Everything you do wrong in your whole life you can always go back and blame your parents. And that's sort of the role we play. That's sort of the role we play in the system. And we take a lot of critique and we take a lot of grace - we take more critique than grace.

**CONCORD: Can you briefly summarize your strategic plan and comment on how you strategic plan changing the curriculum? How do you see it helping or taking away? How does it address continuing education?**

Be careful with this one because on the one hand the answer to this is real clear: it's not going to change. We're taking curriculum off the table. But what we're going to do with the strategic plan, to do that, *that* will be the next step. It will put us in position to address it because it hasn't been addressed in the past 10-15 years. The history is kind of interesting. The last time it was curriculum change that led to strategic plan change. This time we're going to set up things like teaching, learning, and assessment that will play huge roles, but we're going to have to set that up with this strategic thinking. But it will not be addressed directly because it's such a big issue that it will be it's own thing in one or two years. It can't share the bigger picture right now. So we'll get the bigger picture with this and that will set us up through the summer. The last strategic plan, one of the four major emphases was lifelong learning - that engaging the laity in the whole issue of vocation would be the most public face of the seminary. That was a huge change. We're the only seminary that has made a move that dramatic, to say we're not a preacher factory cause as you see in the mission statement, 'we equip leaders for Christian ministry' and we took that quite seriously to mean "all the baptized." We've gotten high marks for that, but we have huge challenges to fill a vision that is that large. What does it mean for a seminary to invest that many resources, that much time and energy not just in MA/MDIV programs, but for all the baptized. I would think we'll still actually strengthen that and expand it. But learning how to do that. We still have a lot to learn.

**CONCORD: What is the core set of information and experience you would like any given Luther students to leave here with?**

PL: Know and tell the story. I'd like to think that as part of it, I think in some ways in our last strategic plan, we set some curricular goals and Dr. Bliese is going to help me get all three of them - all four of them, thanks! - Straight here. But I think they're still quite worthy. It begins with some foundation of knowing and telling the story. I understand that more broadly than simply Biblical competency, that includes all our fundamental historical and theological aspects knowing the Christian story and being able to tell it, share it in a world. Second to interpret and confess in both a missional and confessional sense. And a third one, leading in mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A lot of our emphasis on context, reading the audience, paying attention to the real world, would surface at that level. The fourth one is also discipleship and lifelong learning, and depending on how you look at it, meeting discipleship is lifelong learning, but also understanding our lives as lifelong witnesses in Christ. And that came in the year 2000. It was chewed about in the late 90's, but I don't think we've outgrown it. We might come at that language a little differently in the next strategic plan, but I'd stick with that plan. It's a winner.

RB: I agree with the language too. That's a very important aspect. It's a rhetorical strategy, knowing the story first and being able to take that in a way that you can not only confess it yourself but also interpret it for others - and how that plays it'self out in leading communities in mission, all within the parameter of, all within the framework of, discipleship. Also, I think will stay, the curriculum may change around it, like Reading the Audiences became a really important aspect of that last curricular change. We've been talking a lot about the polarity of confession and mission. I think that's going to change. That's been a very powerful polarity here, but I think it's going to change and be reframed. I can tell you what I'm hoping, but we don't know. It has to play it'self out.

I'd like us to talk more about evangelical leaders. And that word is fraught with possibilities and dangers, because once you take that term 'evangelical' outside just our own comfortable walls here, you know, where we have our Lutheran history and we're all *evangelische*, we tell our stories about Martin Luther, once you take it into the public, people understand 'evangelical' to mean something completely different. And that is the problem: Our identity has been co-opted. It has been subterfuged. It neutralizes our public witness. Even our private, internal identity of who we are, our contribution, really, to mission and to church life. I would hope we would practice an apologetic and try to get it back. And that would have at least three areas where it is unpacked. I would go back to this original mission. First it has to be Biblical. How, if we read the Bible evangelically, if we have a different hermeneutic and it is an 'evangelical reading' of Scripture, what does that mean? So we read it differently than other Christians. We read it evangelically. What does that mean? Of course again, we are fraught with that problem. We, again, are confessing the faith. There is a confessional aspect of being evangelical. We know, of course, Peter got his confession right, he got his words right, but he didn't have a concept of confessing correct, like Mark 8. So what is confessing evangelically?

And what is doing mission evangelically? And it's that same problem, you can do it one way and create havoc and hegemony and all these bad things that we have in mission's history, or mission is the heart of being evangelical. So I really like that term and it's sort of being discussed among the faculty: can we use it? Sort of like the term 'mission', has it been so compromised that you can't use it? Or is it so much a part of our identity. We are the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, but we also get Evangelicals. We get Presbyterians, we get Methodists. Is that a word that would unite us here where we could have a fruitful dialogue and that would be the sort of theological foundation for our curriculum? And it's not just Lutheran, but has a Lutheran spin on what it means to be evangelical. That sort of gets me excited.

PL: And Rick, what has had no debate, at least in any time that I've been present, is all of us are committed, a commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. At least what language to use

RB: And language matters here - that's our stock, that's our currency. So that's how to get at that

PL: Whether we use that word 'evangelical' or not, there's no quibble about whether we have a common commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The question is what is the most useful way to say that today?

**CONCORD: There are four divisions at Luther (History/Theology, Bible, and Leadership), and as one student put it, "there is no coherent view assumed regarding what Christian ministry is for." Could you comment on this?**

RB: You would probably need to say more. Before one could say whether they're right or wrong. There's certain aspects where I'd say they are wrong. We just said that the curriculum has a pretty clear focus: the story, interpreting confessing, the leadership around the grammars of discipleship. But in that there is incredible freedom. So, if you were to say, "What *is* the Lutheran hermeneutic of reading the bible?" you might get - how many are in the Bible department? - that's how many answers you might get. So there would be some answers, some clarity about it, and there would be some lack of clarity where we would have to do some work in the curriculum. The same as if you were to define "what is excellence in ministry?" I think that would be the growing edge for the new curriculum, because - and that's where assessment will take us - because it has to be much more concrete than we've made it, and that's where I'd probably affirm the student saying that is where the new curriculum would have to take us.

And by the way, that is where our accrediting agency, ATS, is pushing us. Everyone is going to have to do a better job of saying “*here’s* your goal of how to better define excellence in ministry and are you achieving it.” What he or she doesn’t know is that we’re considered one of the schools in that have done the most in that area, so we are considered the best in the system. But that said we have a long way to go – and it’s going to be a lot of work.

**CONCORD:** Who is included in the system that we are being compared to?

RB: Well, on one level, all 250 schools of the ATS, all 250 theological schools. But we choose peer schools - ones we want to be compared with. So if you were ask ATS who is doing the best job of assessing, which is basically this question, they have clear goals and outcomes they are trying to achieve them with a combined curriculum, we could be considered one of the leaders by ATS.

**CONCORD:** May we ask who our peer schools are?

RB: That would be across the whole system, and then when we choose, we can choose our peer schools and we compare ourselves with different schools on different things. For example, if we want to know about assessment, we compare ourselves to Alverna, which is a small women’s college – it’s not even a theological school - in Wisconsin, and they’re one of the leaders in the country. They’ve been doing this for 25 years and they’re just brilliant at it. Another things we do – we have 8 – it would be three or four schools in the system like LSTC, Philadelphia, Berkeley, in particular, Princeton , Fuller, CTU, Andover-Newton - schools a bit more of our size and our strength. So the Lutherans, because they’re in our system.

PL: What we think of our size we very often think of Concordia, St. Louis, not in our ELCA system but close to us in size. Very small difference in terms of total enrollment. I think both of you know that we are much larger than all the other ELCA schools, and a few of us put schools like Candler down as a peer school, to kind of know what aspect we’re looking for.

RB: One should say there, what I think the question is really getting to is about assessment. Teaching, learning that will be cutting edge of the whole curriculum. And we’re trying to gear up for that in every domain. One area would be “how do you stop divisions?” And, I’ll just say this for effect, “How do you blow up the division system?” Which was an outgrowth of 19<sup>th</sup> century, you know, Berlin, Schleiermacher. It’s done a lot of good, and we still *need* them. That is our assessment here, we still need them to get some things done, but it can’t build the integration that that question suggests. So there has to be some way we restructure the whole faculty so we do certain things in divisions, but as far as teaching and learning and having this integrated curriculum, there’s other things over here. And that’s more easily said than not, because you’re rethinking the whole way that all of us have been trained for the last 200 years. Everyone works in divisions. Everyone gets trained in divisions. Everyone even got their doctorate in divisions, everyone thinks Bible, and we should go back to an integrated system. And every time you bring it up everyone says, “Oh that’s brilliant! Of course, of course, integration!” But, how to work that way, how to change everything? That’s going to be, in 5 years, when you have the same interview, the question is, “have we made significant strides?” And we’ve got a lot of stuff already in the cooker already to get us there. Probably more than what you wanted...

**CONCORD:** Can you comment on the Biblical literacy of the students at Luther Seminary, how they arrive and how they leave into their profession?

PL: I would say that one of the surprises for me is how much it varies. At that time of arrival, and I say that simply looking at my own discipleship group, in any given year I get 7 new students. I think that's pretty common in terms of how advisees are assigned. Some, really struggling to get caught up on an overview of Scripture pass the BPE. Others wonder why we are even stepping back to that point because they are so far beyond it, not only in their wide and deep knowledge of Scripture, but reading it in an imaginative voice. So we know we have a student body with the experiences entering vary - I will say that, the surprise of variation. Greater question, and I don't have but an anecdotal view, of where our seniors are in the MA and MDIV program. My anecdotal view is that it is based on teaching classes, and I will say that I am occasionally surprised by students who seem not to have a broader, deeper, more workable knowledge of Scripture by their senior year. But, on the whole, I think our students master that area well. And I don't quite know where they master it, but by the senior class it's a delight to have people in class, both MA and MDIV students, and that's not a systemic answer to a whole.

RB: I think the general answer is that Bible literacy has been shrinking. It has been shrinking for quite some time and there's all sorts of reasons for that. It goes back to probably our congregation life in which Lutherans are weak in Bible study and weak in adult education and we're weak compared to other churches. So there's something about our attitude about Scripture, even though we say "Word and Sacrament – Word centered" we're not in the actual living that out and so that also plays it's self out in the college campuses and in Bible camps and in other places so that when students come here they reflect the whole church, not just the students, it's the whole church which is struggling with Bible literacy. But it's not just the literacy; it's an attitude towards it that is probably more fundamental. Cause if there is a certain attitude, you're going to go at it. You're going to get some of the things that you need whether it's in the parish or you teach it privately, or whatever. But if it's some certain attitude, in fact, fine, but if the attitude's missing, you're in trouble, whether you've got a BPE. That's why that was built into the last curriculum. Our Bible teachers didn't want to do that basic work, thinking that you should be coming with that. That's why they built that exam. I think my own sense is that it works for about 50% of our students. It does not work for the other 50%. For that 50% it's a hurdle, it's a hassle. But the other 50% find it *really* helpful! Because they feel like they're catching up and getting some really valuable information. That's part of the curricular change. We're going to have to reevaluate that, both it's uses. Is it a good tool? I mean, those types of things. This is, for all of us, I even say this throughout the whole church, and we all share it. It's a church problem.

**CONCORD: How would you plan to address the differences in the theological and the Bible literacy and even some of the gaps you see with rote proficiency, like writing. How would you address those deficiencies?**

PL: From an enrollment point of view, very widespread conversations about both of these things - the importance of critical thinking skills also communicating that we welcome critical thinking skills here. We have to make sure we're not also stunting students with the kinds of assignments we put before them. I think, frankly, we're going to be doing additional work to teach writing and to teach critical thinking in a North American way of doing that increasingly on our campus. I have colleagues who are in colleges and they're making those same statements. We can't just assume that all students at the graduate level are going to arrive with that. I think of some students from our recent immigrant community. We so need them in leadership. They add vitality to this campus. They've not benefited from the same undergraduate education usually as America, more long-term American students, and we need to be the place where some of that catching up and teaching of skills happens. We're looking at some of the ways we could do that, both within the structure, but also off to the side with some of the resource centers. But I think

you will find that, whether it is in the strategic plan, it's certainly on the minds of those of us who work with students.

RB: I just want to reinforce what Patricia said. Because she's done great work in pointing our attention to this. The first is we will probably need some kind of advance standing. That's a dangerous thing to have, but it's also dangerous not to have it. Obviously someone who has been a religion major coming out of our colleges whose had incredible vocabulary and time to do the theological work comes in with somebody who has had none, that first year can be incredibly frustrating. We know we need to do something there. And some would want advance standing and others would not want advance standing, so you get all sorts of discussions. I think we'll have to do something to address this.

The second of what she said is that in the future we will have to be about the library. Libraries will not be about book warehouses, it's going to be a lot about this resourcing this area. If the thrust of our curriculum remains rhetorical - that is critical - then there are three areas we will have to reinforce. One is writing skills, but often that comes out in writing resources, but that's across the board. Students need better writing skills, going back to how to do that. It's not just so that you're a good writer. Someone could say, "Why do I need to write essays, I'm going to be a pastor." No, it's the rhetorical skills of being able to form an argument that you can put on paper. Secondly then is the verbal skills, which will go with our preaching and worship. We're going to have theatre people and those who can help address arguments on how you present yourself and again it all fits with our rhetorical strategy - the curriculum. If you can't interpret and confess in ways that you can articulate in clear fashion, and that means how also you read your audience, how you stand, all the theater stuff as well as all the reception stuff - you're dead in the water in the parish. The third I think will be a media dimension. It's not just writing and speaking anymore but your use of media to make an argument. Media plays much more of a role in rhetoric than it did for Aristotle. That could be incredibly exciting and that's more of the cutting edge. The other stuff will be basic rhetoric. That will be the new library of the future.

**CONCORD: Along with the same vein of curriculum, we've been talking to students in response to some of this process issue. We've noticed it is quite clear that there is no course-set of theological readings. There is no bottom line of theological literacy offered at Luther Seminary. Why hasn't that happened and what can be done to remedy that. Could you comment a little bit on that?**

RB: You have to be a little more nuanced in that question because there is for graduate programs. There is an entrance exam that has with it in each program a bottom line of readings.

**CONCORD:** We are looking specifically at M.Div and MA programs.

RB: It is interesting to note that we do it for PhDs but that we don't do it for the other programs.

PL: I hadn't thought of those terms - I would say that I think there are a few texts that are held in common by every student and those would be biblical texts and maybe with the rare exception of ecumenical students but maybe some of them would also be familiar with the Book of Concord because it's used in several courses. Isn't it interesting that we don't have a great course. There would be a variety of ways to do the three systematic theology of texts, a good variety, but I wouldn't say that. I'd nuance also to say that there are common texts: the Bible and Book of Concord and then around that, what is it about the variety that actually works, and maybe the nature of the question, what doesn't work?

RB: Well we did change. It was not just books but also theologians. If you would have been at Luther in the 50's, you would have had common literature and they were the standards. Graduate school would be where you went beyond that to spread your wings as well to read all sorts of common literature. The last common book that I can remember that was discarded 10 years ago was *Christian Dogmatics*. That served as a baseline. That was it's function that is no longer in use. The Bible is true but then you also use all sorts of texts to help: commentaries, all the updated commentaries to help define that. Theologians you can read all sorts of stuff, but ours is really 3 courses around that center around the confessions, and then in leadership there'd be no texts. It's the age. It used to be common history texts. I don't think there is any basic historical text today.

PL: I think in some ways there are some elements in our curriculum where very few people teach, so it does create more of a common, by their own book choices, that common list for students and then some other courses where it might be 8 different people teaching the course so...

RB: We don't have Tillich's systematic theology or Barth's. That's shifted as you know since 80's and 90's. It was feminism or contextual theologies that emerged. It wasn't common books. It was often you had to have a common vocabulary you had to know: feminist theology, do you know third world theology - that's sort of where we are. That sort of marks the age.

**CONCORD: Could you define your job and how your work affects the student body?**

PL: I think there are two main facets to my positions, my call, at Luther Seminary. One, I am the Dean of Students. That would be the arena I am most accessible to students. [For example] casual conversations with students walking back from chapel to brief conversations in my office to be pointed toward a resource in the community or on campus working with candidacy, advising the student council, advising the Concord. I am very student-oriented in that role. I think much of what I do, and to a certain degree why I stay late at certain points of the year, is more enrollment oriented - more of the strategic planning toward the student experience and how we're doing that not only on recruitment but also with placement and in some ways. I'm very grateful for what I consider my accessible part of the day which is what I call "Deaning" and being more available to students, but there is a second part to my responsibilities which for a large part is behind the scenes.

RB: The President's role is...you're probably not interested in the shift, but it's really changed dramatically from the days of Al Rogness where they were always present on campus. They mixed the roles of president, dean, and contextual leadership. When a pastor wanted contextual leadership they didn't turn to Randy Nelson, they turned to my office. They were incredibly present. Al Rogness preached every week in chapel. It was a very different presence on campus. Today it's a very different role. About 50% of my time is in fundraising. And that affects students very directly. We have a 20\$ million budget and most of that has to be raised every year. 10-14\$ million has to be raised each year so that means different levels. I mean, we're not building buildings here. It's still scholarship issues, keeping the faculty at a level where you don't have 50 in a classroom, so that we can keep technology up to speed - we can just go down the list. That's a new thing. It's only happened in the last 15 years as the ELCA, and we are thankful for the money they give us church wide and from congregations. But when ELCA was formed, their goal was 50% of our budget, and today it is 9%. That shift, somebody has got to meet that, and that's my primary role. Raise the money to support what we want to achieve.

The president ought to lead, not just as an individual, but collaboratively in strategic planning, Making sure he knows what happening, but there are key elements, like the question of 'evangelical'. How does that play out? That's a whole faculty that's a whole involvement. But

presidents need to play a very active role there. Also things, and that's very important for the students to be aware, those are great discussions. And it's also important for students to walk themselves in that because you will be doing this in your communities. You will be leading those operations just like this. Second would be operations. And that doesn't sound very sexy. The cafeteria needs to produce good food and on time, housing needs to be adequate, faculty are top quality, secretaries, the place is clean. Basically, the president is in charge of all that and responsible for all that as well. Just like pastors. Finally, that might not be my direct responsibility, but I deal with the emails and the letters. I have to put together a team that can make sure I get all these things done. I think the third or fourth thing, whatever we're on, would be personnel. That we've got the right people to get the work done here, and that's not just faculty. That's the cabinet, staff. The president plays a real important role for personnel. That does affect students, big time. But it's sort of a gift you don't see directly, but in an indirect way. But you do when you know you're supported by really good people. It takes a lot of work, to get the right people in the right positions. I think the last is that I've really enjoyed the things that have made me more present here. The president travels a lot. Living on campus has just been great because if I didn't I would run into half as many people as I do. Teaching class still is just a great thrill and one of these days Patricia will give me a discipleship group. But it has to be when my schedule is stable enough to have a discipleship group.

PL: If I can chime in about my discipleship and teaching. It's such a great joy. I don't think I get paid for it, and that's not a complaint. I mean that's one of my great joys and part of my engagement here and how I am known through the privilege of being in a classroom with Luther Seminary students and being part of a discipleship group.

RB: Yeah, just doesn't get better than that.

**CONCORD: How would you propose to more effectively help the candidacy committees and seminary effectively coincide? Do you see any changes necessary or anything working in the current candidacy system?**

PL: I would have to say that I am one of the strongest advocates and believers in the current candidacy program. I think a lot of things work well. Having said that, I will use this opportunity to say two changes I would like to see. I would like good church wide conversation about whether that mid-step of endorsement might be better simply handled at seminary. I simply wonder about that by the time students are undergoing candidacy, they have been two or more semesters on campus, not necessary here daily but a lot more time interacting than with any possible contacts with seminary because those are only occasionally convened. And I wonder if we would be well served to ask the seminary to decide the endorsement question. I actually wonder about simply asking the candidacy committees to do the approval phase at the end. Certainly the factuality of the seminary continue to say who is ready to graduate at the end, but that would be worth thinking about. It would bring a different economy to it I think sometimes where the system appears to not work very smoothly would be those points.

The second big change I would like to see that seniors were assigned at the beginning of the synod where they would serve so they would have about 9 months of talking with a particular synod. If in fact one of our students who thought they had no need of attending to rural ministry or the learning of Spanish knew they were going to Southwestern MN, they would have 2 semesters to remedy that. And I think it would take some of the stresses of candidates since almost all senior candidates end of getting approved and going on to serve, I think there's minimal risk to the synods. People would not be assigned simply because there was a specific

opening, but a kind of profile of openings likely to come up in 9-12 months, so I hope that goes into print for wide circulation. That us the biggest reform I would like to bring.

RB: And I agree. Also if there are any questions any candidate or student has, they have plenty of time to deal with it without creating neuralgia within the system. Otherwise, it's not really discernment. Once you pull someone off the conveyer belt and see someone needs a little bit of this, a little bit of that, it also becomes incredibly neuralgic for everybody. And you don't want to touch this conveyor belt because you know people develop at different times and they need different skills and to say that someone "here you can actually use that last year for discernment and added education or a more focused education." I'd also say – so that's a great answer Patricia – I'd also say the entry way, because we're doing quite a good job with entry, It is becoming more illegal. And we just need to do that in ways that aren't as scary. How do you do that? And all that is new for all of us, but we just cant have lawyers determining everything. We have to do this in a way that is still discernment and encouraging and supportive and that still gets the legal stuff accomplished. I hope our candidacy does a better job in fielding new types of leaders. We are called to lead in new kinds of communities – immigrant communities – and I do think we need, we're replacing everyone, how to get the right resources in they right places. Whether it's a big corporation or a big church, we just need the right resources. It just always will, and 50 years from now, be the same thing, but we really need to work on it now. Last one is the faculty's role. It probably needs to change in terms of the approval process.

**CONCORD: Where do you see the church in 20 years?**

RB: I think we're hitting a turning point and we'll either fall back with some in the ELCA or we'll move forward. And I guess you could say I see forces on both sides. I would hope that Luther would play a role as a catalyst to make change in the world to keep this positive momentum in the ELCA. So I'm very hopeful we'll see an explanation at school. I think the student body will grow and you'll see a very different campus here, not just in 20 years but in 5-10 years. There's a window of opportunity for us and I hope we take it both programmatically at the school. And I hope that would represent not just Luther but also the very powerful forces in the ELCA and in the wider church. So I'm actually quite optimistic.

PL: I want to answer the question in terms of the church in North America. I think for the church in 20 years I look for great vitality, not necessarily greater numbers, but greater influence in all aspects of life. In a world that will also be a world of many religions, in this country and also globally, I'm really jealous of students coming up now in ministry. I think the 21<sup>st</sup> century there's going to be a clarity that was not there in the mid 20ths century when I was being shaped for ministry. And I think it has to do with being a more vibrant voice, less taken for granted as part of the culture. So I think we will make a difference, not just Lutherans, but all Christians in the US and a global kind of freedom that will be good to them. There is today, from very much an African perspective, but also the visiting Tanzanian choir that just highlighted the concerns about Iraq. Not only to sing but to lift up our country's involvement in Iraq, as one of the places calling for attention. That's exciting, that we're not as provincial or parochial about our concerns. But I don't necessarily mean greater numbers, I don't necessarily mean more prosperous careers if people want to see public ministry in terms of careerism, but I think this is very exciting. And I think some of this is seeded back in shifts in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We both have a fondness for the work of Bonhoeffer, in part because Bonhoeffer in part. My first reading Bonhoeffer was at a much earlier time in my life, now reading Bonhoeffer talking about the world. And it's never about the church being the dominant force but it is about God being God in the world.

RB: Let me just give you some examples. One is just fun. We already see 7 years ago that the average age of the seminary student was 33-34 and today it is 28 and still dropping. So you see a huge shift in who's actually discerning leadership. Second, in 10 years all our signage here will be in Spanish, but it also might be in other languages as well. Whether our signage is or not, the student body will because immigrant churches and those who are recent immigrants will be just flooding the place. So we will go back to the future, in a sense. We will once again become an immigrant seminary. All these things we are working at in the 20's and 30's, even the 50's. We still talk courses in preaching in Norwegian cause you really go out to immigrant churches. Now it's going to be Oromo and it's going to be Spanish and it's going to be Hmong, and other things. That's extremely exciting. I think that the curriculum still will have courses like Reading the Audiences. But in addition to CPE, we will have a community organizing, and mission development - anything that teaches us how to gather a community. Leadership options will explode. Not only will we have bishops but we will have sub-bishops. Cause many of the congregations around our whole country will be led by laity. They will be the pastors. They will be non-ordained and they will be supervised by local pastors who have been through the seminary. And our educational opportunities will expand because we're about leadership and not just about pastors. You're going to have some sort of leadership program that looks so much different than when the ELCA formed and wrote that book on 3-Fold Ministry. That thing was just so irrelevant and will be irrelevant in 10 years. But now you're going to have TEEM candidates, and AIMS, deacons, and all sorts of leadership that really is just emerging today. But it will be established probably in 10-15 years and coming together. And how all that leadership functions together. And the seminary, I hope is not catching up to that, but will be leading in some of these things as well.

**CONCORD: How do you understand is this process (at Luther) preparing students for this?**

PL: I think, to restate, that's a very broad question. That one of the things I try to pay attention to as I get to know individual students is 'how are they navigating life' in a both deep and profound way. And the curricular requirements, contextual leadership, and candidacy, are all aspects of how complex our lives are in terms of friendships, family life, physical, emotional well being. Our students who can learn to navigate the pressures here, since being in seminary is so much easier than almost any other place in life, and certainly easier than parish ministry. That's what I'm looking for. If people are learning lessons to do those, to embrace a life that is full of surprises and new demands and that kind of vulnerability of new learning. If that's happening here, I think that not only is our curriculum working, but those are the people who will be vibrant and vital in their ministry amid a culture of change. When people are overwhelmed here and don't learn from that overwhelming to reassess how they approach life then I think probably the integration needs to be made.

RB: We are very committed to contextual learning and we're still learning how to do it. All theological education is contextual. But we're still learning how to do that. So that you'd never be, let's say in a library thinking theologically, without reflecting on some sort of contextual environment. I think we have a great opportunity. I mean, we've made some advances there. But I think we have a great opportunity of integrating all of our contextual experiences with the curriculum. So it's to make sure you're not taking all these classes, then, for example, sending you out onto internship and "somehow" integration happens. We can't do that. But somehow we have to align the curriculum with this experiential, and that could be CPE, we could be organizing stuff - *any* experiential dimension. How do you align that with your curriculum? Which means often aligning pastors, CPE supervisors, internship supervisors with what you're trying to do in

your curriculum. We have the opportunity to do that in the new curriculum. We did not in the old for all sorts of different reasons. And that will also suggest to you in parishes if all learning of theology, all doing of theology is contextual what does that mean for your Bible studies, what does that mean for your preaching? How are you not just coming in with the expert, “Oh, I have all this knowledge, now here’s the Apostles Creed, learn it,” or “do it.” How are you building that same contextual element to your own pastoral ministries? It’s one thing at a seminary, but actually you have the same opportunity. That’s how adults learn. And that’s how theology is actually made. People may theologize out of their daily lives, how you using it in your daily lives. That’s the stuff of theological imagination. So hopefully we also model that. So it’s not that we’re just doing that here, you back to old methods when we’re in Bible studies or in preaching.

**CONCORD: Last question. A student mentioned this and we would like to ask you, “If two people disagree about what is true, does one of them have to be wrong?”**

RB: No. And *that* is the Lutheran genius. Not only is it a great question, it’s our insight. So I go to the communion table and it’s not what gets me up there is whether I’m Democrat or Republican, or whether I agree or disagree on the war, or whether I agree or disagree sexuality or homosexuality in general, or on a thousand other issues, where at other churches you have to agree on your ethics before you can have communion. Or you have to agree on your doctrine before you go to communion. For us, our doctrine suggests that what brings us together in unity is something different - it’s the Gospel. And that allows us to live out a faith. And faith will take you sometimes to the Republican Party and sometimes it will take you to the Democrat party. It will take you different sides of the protest line. It will take you on different sides of the war. And Lutherans are first convinced that it is life out of faith that’s important, but it is life that we need to know will take you even in the same family in very different directions. And we value and celebrate that. So that’s a great question.