

Future *Shepherd* of God's Flock

Where did you and your wife live prior to coming to the Seminary?

St. Paul, Minn., where we both attended Concordia University, St. Paul, graduating in May of 2004.

How did your study at Concordia University, St. Paul, prepare you for the Seminary?

In my undergraduate work I was able to build my own major within the pre-Seminary program. In doing so, I looked at the classes offered at the Seminary and at some of the strengths of the curriculum and professors at Concordia University, St. Paul. In the end, my major was "Congregational Systems and Ministry"—a mix of outreach and parish education (director of Christian education) classes along with counseling, leadership, congregational finance, worship and other classes that I thought would be applicable to my pastoral ministry formation. With small class sizes and even a few independent study classes, I was able to talk to many pastors and professors at the university.

How were you active in the church prior to coming to the Seminary? How did this activity influence your decision to apply to the Seminary?

Growing up the son of a pastor enabled me to be immersed within the life of a congregation. Also, upon entering college at Concordia University, St. Paul, I soon became involved at a local congregation—Jehovah Lutheran Church—and spent the greater part of three years as its youth director. Starting from scratch, I built a congregational youth program and a community youth outreach that strongly supported my decision to apply to the Seminary. Interacting with people on a day-to-day basis while sharing the Word of God with them was incredible!

Who were some of the influential people in your decision to aspire to the Holy Ministry?

My father was probably the number one person who inspired me to pursue preparation for the Holy



Joshua and Leah Bernau

Ministry. Seeing first-hand much of his ministry has led me to a deeper respect for the work that he does and the Office that he has been given. Others who have influenced my development in preparation for the Holy Ministry have been Dr. Trapp and Dr. Carter of Concordia University, St. Paul, and Rev. Robert Benke of Jehovah Lutheran Church in St. Paul.

What were some of the helpful insights you gained from these influential people?

Devote yourself to serving the Lord and to serving His people. The task is challenging, yet rewarding. There is the incredible opportunity to see lives changed through Baptism and through encountering and overcoming, in Christ, the daily struggles of life.

How did you and your wife discuss the decision to come to the Seminary?

When we first met, I already had intentions of coming to the Seminary. Yet, as we progressed in our relationship, Leah had some questions and concerns about being a pastor's wife. We discussed other options for me. Eventually it came down to realizing that if God was leading us to be married, then he would equip Leah to be the wife of a pastor. Since coming to the Seminary, she has continued to work through the stigma of being a pastor's wife. When and where the Lord leads, we simply follow.

Leah, what is your profession? How do you deal with the rigorous schedules you and your husband have?

I am a Lutheran elementary school teacher. In many cases, we are both equally busy. But we are intentional about setting aside time for each other each day. We make sure to talk with each other about our day each evening during dinner. We usually try to have at least one hour together at the end of the day. Many times, we just have to understand that there are things that need to be done (homework, correcting papers, cleaning house), and we will spend time together when the weekend comes.

Josh and Leah, how do you share time in the Word with each other?

Right now we are participating in a two-year "read through the Bible" with our church. Each day we set aside time to read the Scriptures and daily

devotional. Often, we do some deeper investigating as questions arise from the readings.

How does a seminarian continue to grow in Christ amidst the rigors of Seminary study?

Setting aside time for prayer and Bible study are a must! Also, conversation with classmates outside of the classroom has been an incredible opportunity to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Daily chapel also is structured time that enables us to gather around the Word and sacraments.

How does the study itself contribute toward this growth?

The Word is a constant guide within the curriculum of the Seminary. In the midst of classes, there are many questions that I am forced to consider. In this process, I am able to return time and time again to the Scriptures and to Christ. The classroom study itself continues to form a framework for theological thinking within the church and the world.

How do you see Christ in the classroom at Concordia Seminary?

The presence of Christ permeates the classroom at Concordia Seminary. The professors exemplify what it means to lead a Christ-centered life. Many of the classes begin with prayer and include time searching the Scriptures to see how it pertains to the particular discussion at hand.

How have you received support from the Seminary community?

Ever since our first visit, the staff has been very supportive. Also, numerous friends have provided us with prayer and support during tough times. Through it all, the Seminary community has truly proven to be the body of Christ.

As a couple living off campus, what are some things you have done to be involved in the Seminary community?

Throughout our time here at the Seminary, we have attended various activities—intramurals, movie nights, concerts, etc. We also enjoy getting together with friends—inviting them to our house or visiting local attractions. Moreover, Seminary wives' classes are a great opportunity to form a community.

What are some of the financial considerations that couples should be aware of as they enter the Seminary?

All of your tuition is not guaranteed to be covered. Your budget will be tight, but there are incredible blessings to the Seminary community, such as the Food Bank and Re-Sell-It Shop. You need to watch your budget, but living a fairly normal life in which you can still enjoy an evening out is possible. If you enjoy trying new places to eat, buy a St. Louis Entertainment Book (\$30). There are hundreds of coupons for local restaurants that offer “buy one, get one free” deals. The Seminary also offers a variety of financial assistance classes through Worker Benefit Plans which one can take advantage of. Last, but not least, never forget that the people of the Lord are extremely generous. When finances are tight, there always seems to be a little pleasant financial surprise that comes from family, friends and others in the church.

What are some things you and Leah do to keep in good health?

We take time to walk during the evenings, ride bikes (the Seminary offers students the use of bikes for free through Holy Spokes), play tennis, run, play Dance Pad and work out (the Seminary also has a wonderful Fitness Center available to students and families). Although our lives are busy, we also try to eat healthy.

What do you enjoy most about being a student at Concordia Seminary?

The camaraderie with others who are preparing for the pastoral ministry is the most engaging element of the Seminary life. The learning filters out of the classroom and into the daily conversations between the students. Not only is there a strong network of support, but there also is a mutual understanding of being in a similar situation with one another—encountering the same struggles and frustrations, as well as a heightened sense of anticipation as vicarage placement or Call Day draws near.

Outside of the Seminary, what are some things you have enjoyed about living in St. Louis?

Forest Park (walking, biking, picnicking, attending the Muny—the world's largest outdoor theatre, the Zoo) is probably one of the best things about living in St. Louis—and it is all free!