

# LIFE AT THE SEM

August 2020

Ryan and Kari Maser

## PRAYER REQUESTS

- For Kari as she begins her year at Immanuel Lutheran, Wentzville, MO.
- For Ryan as he begins classes, field education, and works for Campus Safety.
- For those affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19), that God grant healing, strength, stability, and a cure.
- For public servants, administrators, pastors, and business leaders, as they seek the best plans and protocols.
- For Concordia Seminary, as they seek to call their next president.

## JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME YESTERDAY AND TODAY AND FOREVER

I will be honest, it's sometimes a challenge to find something to write about each month. Often, it is sort of like when I sit down to write a sermon. There are many things on my heart and mind, that I want to speak to everything. But as you may know, that can become a daunting, even impossible task.

It becomes an even bigger challenge when there is so much happening in the world. So much hurt, division, pain, suffering, illness, death. Name-calling, hate, indifference, polarity, pure evil. Hurricanes, violent tornadoes, drought. As soon as my mind settles on one issue, there is another problem, news story, dilemma that arises. One could even spend a whole day meditating on the question "Where is the end to all of this?" and not arrive at a clear conclusion.

I've heard it said that all of this is a result of 'information overload.' So many of us live with the media at our fingertips and a searchable database accessible with two opposing thumbs. Our minds can only take so much information and news until they become 'numb.'

There is even research that suggests our attention spans have decreased significantly in recent decades. Ever try sitting through a 15-minute presentation without having the urge to check your phone, even while you know there is nothing that demands your attention?

Did you notice the heading? Look again. It says, "**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.**" I wonder how many people have

forgotten that truth, as I read about yet another catastrophic event. Too often we give into the desire to take salvation for the human race into our own hands, rather than looking to the One who has already conquered evil, destruction, and calamity.

The heading above is the theme verse for the 2020-2021 academic year at Concordia Seminary. It comes from the New Testament letter of Hebrews 13:8. Written to Jewish people who had become Christian, this letter expounds on who Jesus really is – that he was more than just a guy who was killed on the cross; rather, He is the Son of God who intercedes on behalf of sinful people.

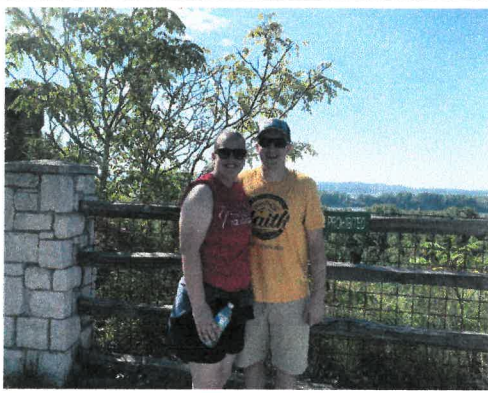
Stop and think for a moment. Jesus is the same today, in the midst of our ever-changing and destructive world, as he was one hundred years ago when the world seemed a little more 'peaceful'. Jesus is the same today as he was over 1000 years ago when St. Augustine penned these words "My soul does not rest until it rests in Thee." In fact, Jesus is the same today, with nail marks in his hands and a scar in his side, as when his disciple Thomas touched him and said, "My Lord and my God."

If this isn't enough, Jesus **will be** the same a year from now. He will be the same, generation after generation, until that final hour. The Gospel, of Christ coming to the world to bring life and forgiveness, brings a timeless hope and promise that is found nowhere else in this world. That hope is the very thing we at Concordia Seminary are called to study and learn and turn right around and proclaim and live in our lives, so that others may hear and have eternal, living hope in Jesus.

## SOME THINGS DO (AND DO NOT) CHANGE

After three weeks of unpacking and adjusting, we can say that we are finally settled in and ready for the school year to begin! While we still often think back to our vicarage year and miss the small-town experience and the people we left, what a joy it has been to be back on campus. We have been blessed to be reunited with classmates and dear friends and have had several opportunities to visit and catch up in the past few weeks.

Kari has been busy getting back into the routine of being a full-time preschool teacher once again at Immanuel – Wentzville. The past few weeks have been spent organizing and getting her classroom ready to welcome students this coming Monday (8/24). She will have 23 three and four-year-olds this year. She is blessed to have the same wonderful aide that she had two years ago when she was at Immanuel. While the preschoolers are not required to wear masks this school year will still look very different than most. We pray for the safety and strength of her schoolteachers and staff, along with students and their families.



Enjoying a hike at a local state park!

With each day that goes by, I am getting more excited to start class on August 31<sup>st</sup>. Classes will look a little different since the last time I was in the classroom. Masks will be required (until further notice) and the chairs will be spaced six feet apart. While this will be an adjustment, I am looking forward to the topics and classes themselves – the opportunity to dive deeper into areas of theology, such as Spirit Christology, Lutheranism in America, the book of Psalms, and creative ways to approach preaching. I will also be returning to my field work congregation – Good Shepherd Lutheran in Collinsville, IL, where I plan to help with worship, preach occasionally, and learn more about parish ministry. Before class officially starts, I have been keeping busy working my old Campus Safety job, getting the garden back into shape, time with classmates, enjoying a few good books, and helping with New Student Orientation.

As we ease into this new chapter and look forward to what God has in store for us this upcoming school year, we look to Jesus as our living, enduring, and changeless hope. We pray that God would continue to guide and lead you in all areas of your life, even as you experience the unexpected. Thank you for your prayers, encouragement, and support!

In Christ, our living hope,

Ryan and Kari