***The Mission Central Meyer Minute***

I’m writing this after attending the opening service for Concordia Seminary’s 185th academic year. As I was watching the new students, bright-eyed and eager, I thought about all the myths people believe about our seminaries.

It’s a myth that the Seminary graduates pastors. We graduate men who have shown an aptitude for pastoral ministry, who have passed academic and practical requirements, and who have a first call to public ministry of Word and Sacraments. A great highlight for students in their last year of study is being certified by the Faculty as **ready** for their first call. Ready to go out and do it. Ready to experience what ministry really is. You might say new graduates have a toolbox of knowledge and skills for the ministry, but it’s years of using those “tools” that matures them into real pastors, real “Seelsorgers” as the Germans say, pastors who know how to care lovingly for the souls entrusted to them.

The young married woman whose husband ran out on her… The husband killed in an auto accident… The couple who told me they were divorcing, never talked to me before but expected me to bless their decision… The grade school child with profound emotional problems after her only parent died… The confirmands who never come back to church… The ministry blunders I made… Yes, all these are my examples from my years in ministry. So often the congregation was supportive, but sometimes a member took me aside. “Pastor, were you right to handle the situation that way?” Successes, mistakes, maturation… that’s how a loving congregation under the grace of God helps form a pastor.

And it’s a myth that a new pastor is mission minded. Many know how to talk the talk but have no experience walking the walk. Yes, they’ve heard about mission in classrooms, chapel, and conversations. Some even go on a mission trip to Mission Central. But again, it’s you, under the enabling grace of God, that can help form them to be passionate witnesses for Jesus. Their very limited experience with hands-on mission needs the maturing experiences that you and your fellow congregation members can provide by your personal and programmatic outreach to your community, region, and through Mission Central to the world that is dying without Christ. To be personal again, I don’t remember much that the Seminary taught me about mission. Oh, they did, for sure! But what really taught me was seeing laypeople and older pastors actively engaged in outreach for Jesus. Anyone can sing a mission hymn; learning and doing with others is how the Spirit of God forms mission-minded pastors.

Waiting for the service to begin, I spoke with three new students. One was from Omaha, the second from Quincy, Illinois, and the third from Ithaca, New York. I wished them blessings as they begin their study. I pray that you and your congregation will one day—with God’s grace and patience, they’re essential—help form them into mature pastors, men who lovingly care for souls redeemed by Jesus.