



Trinity Lutheran Seminary

2199 East Main Street, Columbus, OH 43209

A Teaching Moment Reminds Me Of The Spirit's Power

When I think about the extension of mission in the congregation, I think of Jeff. His spouse and two young daughters were some of the first 'in the door' of the mission congregation I had been called to form in 1984. Not Jeff. In fact, whenever I visited in the family home, Jeff would flee to the basement. He had been raised in the church—Lutheran, in fact. Not anymore.

Jeff was a surveyor, and when King of Glory Lutheran Church needed sightings and elevations for the property on which the church's building would be constructed, I thought: "Why not Jeff?" I still can't believe it, but he accepted my invitation—and provided everything we needed. Later, when I thanked him, he said: "*Pastor, this is the first time anyone asked me to do something in the church that I knew how to do.*" And, Jeff started to worship with his family! A teaching moment!

Many of the un-churched in our midst are formerly church people. The recent study by *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life* exhibits a 44% factor of persons who are "out of and away from" the church of their upbringing. As Timothy Lull used to say, "and most of them have scar tissue." It is challenge enough to tell the story of Jesus to people who have never heard it. But it is an even greater challenge to convince those with an earlier, negative experience of the Christian community to give the church another try. Even the most welcoming church will not easily receive a visit from those whose memories of the church are of law, judgment, or even boredom.

As Trinity prepares to send out pastors and leaders into the church, a formidable challenge awaits them. The work of mission is always formidable. I commit to you that Trinity's curriculum continually moves toward the parish and the discernment of mission into the world. Thank you for your continued investment that helps *form leaders for Christ's church at work in the world.* And this is what Trinity needs most from you:

1. Your prayer that pastors and leaders will be identified and raised up from our congregations.
2. Your invitation into service. I love meeting with a confirmation class and I am not shy to ask, "Have you considered ministry?" When was the last time you asked?
3. Your financial support for future ministry. Tuition at Trinity is about 1/3 of what it costs to attend a private college/university and I want to keep it that way. It is the only way to manage student debt. But keeping the tuition down presumes faithful support from the church and congregations. We need you. Thank you.

And now back to Jeff. Jeff broadened my vision. It was a teaching moment. Jeff reminds me that the Holy Spirit is up to something in the church today. Too often we see the down side, but the Holy Spirit has the power to encourage us to ask someone "to do something in the church they had not been asked to do." I believe each new crop of Trinity graduates will be central to this invitation and this movement of the Holy Spirit.

Thanks be to God,

Mark R. Ramseth
President

Almighty God, in Jesus Christ you called ordinary people to be disciples and sent them out to teach and preach your truth. Bring to seminaries men and women who are honest and eager to serve you. Give them tender hearts to care for others, and tough minds to wrestle with your word, so that, as they speak and act for you, people may repent and return to love, believing in Jesus Christ, who is our Lord and our Master. Amen.