

(December 2009)

To the Atlantic District,

Greetings in the Name above all names, Jesus Christ!

It is with great gratitude that I express my thanks to you for this gift. I am humbled by this honor. It is exciting to be out here in St. Louis, Missouri for my studies at seminary. Here at Concordia Seminary I am learning the theology and skills that, God willing, I can bring back to my beloved Atlantic District while as a student or after my time here.

Allow me to give you a little background on myself. I am the oldest of three sons to Michael and Tricia Stancek of Islip, NY. I have a 19 year old brother at Palm Beach Atlantic University in Florida and an 11 year old brother who is a 6<sup>th</sup> grader at Islip Middle School. My Mother works near MacArthur Airport on Long Island at a school for children with developmental disabilities. My parents have faithfully raised me in the faith since my baptism at the same place of worship, Trinity Lutheran Church, in Islip. Trinity is a wonderful congregation with a long time and faithful shepherd, Reverend David Wackenhuth, a fantastic youth director (and DCE colloquy candidate), Christopher Boccalupo, and a Specific Ministry Pastoral Program Vicar, Michael Staneck. That's right. My dad is also on the road to becoming a pastor. This is his first year in the program and we were both at orientation together in Saint Louis. Please pray for him as he takes on this task while also running his own small business as well!

This past summer I had the great opportunity to intern at The Lutheran Church of St. John the Evangelist in Brooklyn. Pastor Jonathan Priest was a great mentor for those ten weeks as I learned a lot about ministry. Urban ministry is something that I have a great desire for. In fact during this winter quarter I am going to World Impacts St. Louis located in the heart of the inner city Thursday nights for an outreach to young men in the neighborhood. The best remedy for the brokenness, confusion, and sin in this world is nothing else than God's Word and His sacraments. This theology of the cross in Word and deed is what saves us sinners, and everybody needs that.

What I have been learning at Concordia Seminary through my first quarter, and now into my second, is that we are to engage the world head on with the Gospel. Since we have the best theology in the land, the seminary is encouraging us to actually use it. And encourage is what we are doing. The seminary is a short walk and drive from some pretty populated areas that have no connection to the seminary at all. President Dale Meyer in the latest *Concordia Journal* details all the access this little seminary in St. Louis really has. I highly recommend that reading!

It is that theological training, with real world application, that your scholarship money is going to. I take this education and my vocation very seriously. I am looking forward to being in constant conversation with the Atlantic District about my time at seminary!  
Thanks again for all you do!

Peace in Christ,  
Matthew Stancek