

SRU Campus Ministry

by Vicar Wessel

Introduction and First Month as Vicar

When I was assigned to serve All Saints Lutheran Church and Student Center as vicar back in April, it came as a complete surprise to me. Campus ministry was a facet of church-work that I had never considered before. Although this year will bring plenty of challenges, I am honored and excited to have these opportunities for growth and service. The environment here at Slippery Rock is quite different from anything I have experienced before, coming from a small town in the Midwest. Although Slippery Rock is not much bigger than my hometown, the fact that it is a university town changes the dynamic quite a bit.

Even the university dynamic here is a bit of a new area for me to explore, since I attended Bethany Lutheran College, a school associated with the small confessional Lutheran church body of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. As a secular university Slippery Rock is very different, but that is only all the more impetus for campus ministry, to bring the gospel and Christian fellowship to a place that otherwise lacks it completely. Although my college experience was quite different, it will nonetheless prove helpful, I think. I especially enjoyed my final year at Bethany, during which I researched and wrote my bachelor's thesis on fourth century bishop Ambrose of Milan's theology of nature. This interest in the theology of the first article, of creation, has stayed with me. It is particularly important and relevant to confess God's authorship of, work in, and lordship over the created world in a society that strongly questions fundamental parts of the natural world, such as what a man or woman is or what marriage is. In a secular setting, presenting Christianity will often need to start with elements of the first article, as we see exemplified by Paul in Acts 17 and Romans 1.

Over the summer, there has not been a lot of work to be done with the campus ministry, but even beyond looking forward to the coming year, some things are underway. Pastor Deal and I were able to attend a couple orientations for students incoming this fall at SRU, as were a few of our members here at All Saints. They were wonderful opportunities to have that ever-so-important first interaction with students, to let them know that there is a church community that is ready and waiting to welcome them and to provide for their needs of body and mind and, God willing, soul, even if they do not recognize this final need at the time. Over the course of these orientations, we were able to invite students to our student meals and various activities, and we received a good response, with more students than ever asking us to contact them with updates and reminders during the school year. We all eagerly await getting to know these students and returning students as well.

In addition to the orientations, plans for a Bible study at Grove City College are underway, and I have also begun to work towards establishing a presence at Westminster College as well. Between these three colleges, there will be no shortage of opportunities to serve and to share the gospel. I am particularly looking forward to working with international students, due both to my love of travel and interest in international mission work on the one hand, and also to the increased need for a caring community among those who are so far removed from their homes.

Although this vicarage was a bit of an unexpected surprise, it has already proved an amazing and fruitful experience. I have already learned so much from Pastor Deal and have loved getting to know the congregation and community a little bit so far. I am looking forward to

the remainder of my time here, and pray for God's blessing upon the congregation and the campus ministry with all of the challenges and opportunities it will bring.



Vicar Wessel attended orientations at SRU, along with Pastor Deal and three members from the congregation, to establish contact with incoming students.