

In Memory of Gerhard Krodel from the ELC Theological Seminary:

On the 28th of August, 2005, Professor and Dean Dr. Gerhard Krodel died after a long illness. He passed away at the age of 79 in his home in Gettysburg, PA (USA).

“The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Central Asia needs its own Theological Seminary if it wants a future.” Dr. Krodel was the first who clearly saw and expressed this need in the early 1990’s. And he worked constantly to make incarnate this insight. As the President of the Lutheran Board for Mission Support, Inc., he together with his wife Joan Krodel for almost 15 years worked in America to gather funds for the ELC’s Theological Seminary. First, the funds they gathered went toward the purchase of the former Lutheran church building in Novosaratovka (St. Catherine’s) and then for the renovation of that, the seminary’s main building; later their funds went toward student aid and finally, toward the building of the Katerina Luther house, finished not long ago.

The ELC Theological Seminary’s very existence is due in large part to the tireless effort by Dr. Krodel and his wife, Joan.

Professor Krodel was born on February 7, 1926 in Lichtenstein (Germany) and studied protestant theology in the universities of Regensburg, Tubingen and Erlangen and in Union Theological Seminary in New York. In 1952 he was ordained into the former American Lutheran Church and for three years worked as pastor in St. John’s Lutheran Church in Long Beach, NY. He began his more than 40-year teaching career as professor of classical languages and religion in Capital University in Columbus, OH. From 1958 to 1964 he taught New Testament at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Debuque, IA. From 1964 to 1977 as Professor of New Testament at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. From 1977 to 1994 he was professor at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, PA. Until 1991 he served concurrently as Dean of the Seminary.

Professor Krodel was the author of a whole number of commentaries to New Testament books and wrote many papers and articles on Biblical studies. Besides this he was a member of the international Lutheran-Orthodox commission.

The Theological Seminary mourns the loss of its friend of many years, Dr. Gerhard Krodel, who was its constant helper. We will keep him in our memories and we are very thankful to him.

We at the Seminary will remember his wife Joan in our prayers, as wells as their three daughters, four grandchildren, his sister and brother.

The Reverend Dr. Gerhard Krodel

The task is clear, but not easy. How to convey a full and appropriate sense of the Rev. Dr. Gerhard Krodel; my friend, Gerhard? Undoubtedly, the one best prepared to do this is Gerhard's longtime colleague and great friend, the former President of this seminary, Herman Stuempfle. Dr. Stuempfle, whom I regard as one of the three finest preachers I have known in the Lutheran Church, was one half of that excellent team of Dean and President which led Gettysburg Seminary for 13 years. Herman was Gerhard's colleague and dear friend until his passing. Were he able he would stand where I stand.

As you may know, I was never formally Gerhard's student, although I routinely learned from him over the last 14 years. The advantage was mine. He was at all times a delightful, gentle tutor. Such great discussions we had! Often by telephone, they began by my asking questions and Gerhard with that enormous breadth of knowledge patiently responding. Nor, was I his colleague in his teaching years when over 40 years he taught at a church college and three of our seminaries. I never sat with him on one of the numerous boards and study groups to which he gave himself in the interests of Church and Faith. My credential is plain and simple. I somehow or other became his friend. More importantly for me, he became mine. We did talk about cutting grass and compared our lawn tractors. His was bigger. It is an unexpected honor to be in this special role. To prepare I have spoken with students, scholars who knew him and his work, fellow professors and Gerhard's true-life companion, his wife Joan. You should know all their stories meld together and are consistent. There are not two or three Gerhards. His integrity was too pronounced for that. Once you knew him you knew the real Gerhard.

Those who did that best occupy these front pews. Joan, his wife and partner for 53 years; his daughters, their husbands, his grandchildren and his brother Gottfried, a distinguished scholar retired from his chair at Valparaiso University. In the story of their lives you and I discover much of the story of Gerhard Krodel. Joan is the pastor's daughter who fell in love with her father's vicar. She established a home renowned among all who knew them for its generous hospitality. She was the engineer of that renowned Krodel hospitality. More than that, apart from being mother and grandmother to which the love of her children attest, the pastor's daughter, a member of a distinguished Lutheran

family herself, is in her own right theologically informed and able. She knows the history of the Church. She knows with accuracy the "ins and outs" of American Lutheranism. Joan, an outstanding editor and writer, shared in so many of Gerhard's ventures that they indeed can only be viewed as a team. There is more than a little reflection of Katherine von Bora here. And, that it not be lost in what some may think to be the more important facts in the story of this great teacher and scholar, Gerhard Krodel loved his family, his three daughters their husbands and his beloved grandchildren. He knew each of them so very well and cherished them. A gathering of the Krodel family in any dimension was for him pure pleasure and almost overwhelming joy. He loved his family.

Now, to catch a portrait of Gerhard: We have all been amused by Garrison Keillor's *Lake Wobegon* images of Lutherans including our pastors. None of that fits Gerhard Krodel. If Lake Wobegon defines your sense of a Lutheran pastor, theologian, teacher or family, you will never understand my friend. The passions and energy Gerhard poured into his life and work have roots and purposes that are much deeper. As some of you know, Gerhard's brother, Gottfried, in the American Edition of Luther's Works drew upon the body of more than 2500 known letters of Luther to provide the finest translations and commentaries of those letters in the English language. Lest we forget Luther's portion of our Lutheran heritage, lost perhaps in the humor of Lake Wobegon or become disoriented by some bureaucratic sense of contemporary Lutheranism, I want to share with you the introduction of a letter from Martin Luther to his friend, George Spalatin. Luther's writing to his friend captures more than a little of the flavor I believe was active in Gerhard. At the time of this translation the letter was thought the oldest preserved letter in Luther's handwriting. Luther wrote in August of 1514 to Spalatin regarding John Reuchlin, the Humanist and Hebrew scholar, who had been tried by the Inquisition.

"To the most learned and highly esteemed priest in Christ, George Spalatin, my dearest friend,

Greetings. Up to this point, most learned Spalatin, I considered Ortwin, that little "poet" in Cologne, to be an ass. But as you see he has [now] become a dog, even more, a ravenous wolf in sheep's clothing, if not even a crocodile, as you sense so keenly. I assume that finally he himself "caught on" to his asininity (if I may use Greek in Latin), since our John Reuchlin pushed his nose in it, but since Ortwin has considered stripping off [his donkey skin] and clothing himself with the majesty of the lion, he is now instead ended up as a wolf or a crocodile..... Good Lord what can I say?"

As you can see, with Luther in our heritage it is difficult to pretend to be from timid, uncertain stock. No, there's nothing of Lake Wobegon in Gerhard. I hasten

to add never did I find Gerhard vulgar or profane. But, strong, clear views, fervent, persistent, outspoken and passionate that he was absolutely. Those who loved him would have had him no other way.

As one of his students described, "We'd laugh at how sometimes he would get frustrated with something very stupid that the church was doing. There was nothing calm about him. You knew his feelings and emotions. He was a churchman, family man, ethical and honest to the core, and expected the same of all pastors. Unfaithfulness at any level was inexcusable to Gerhard."

Some have noted how Gerhard took strong positions. Has that become unusual for a Lutheran? In his retired years I remember this seminary at one time thought it necessary to distance itself from their retired professor's views regarding bishops. They wanted it known that his position was not the position of the seminary. I remember thinking how odd of them to believe it necessary to state that, for I never knew seminaries were expected to hold positions other than to teach in accord with Holy Scripture and the Confessions. I recall discussing with Gerhard what was happening on our seminary campuses, for my life has not led me since my graduation to frequent seminaries. Several years ago I was invited to speak at one and then invited to have lunch with several of the students and a faculty member. (It was not this seminary). I was amazed to learn that the issue of bishops being debated at that time in the ELCA was not a subject of campus discussion. The students, however, were eager for that discussion during our lunch. The professor at the table confirmed that the issue had not been discussed widely and openly on the campus. Later, finding that difficult to believe and speaking with other members of the faculty, I learned that was indeed the case. My memory of seminary was of professors like Gerhard who were alive, vigorous, outspoken and, I thought, unafraid. Perhaps I was oblivious to the politics of my day, but clearly something had changed. I remembered seminaries as the arenas in which issues of the church were widely discussed by the faculty in the presence of the students and with the students. I hasten to add that Gerhard spoke respectfully of many in the office of bishop. Many had been his students. Many were his friends. Bishop Mocko, our preacher today, was very dear to him.

One can't understand Gerhard without taking into account his background. Born in 1926 he was a Franconian. Son of a pastor who was the forthright Dean of his regional clergy, and who likely survived the Hitler era because he had been a decorated German hero of World War I. Gerhard received his education at Regensburg during the 30s and early 40s. He came of age during the most tumultuous period of the 20th century; truly, one of the most horrific in human history. He came of an age to serve in war as that fierce war was ending. With his own experience as background Gerhard was always mindful of his father's

conviction that if the church had spoken early and sure, the scourge that became Hitler's movement probably would not have occurred. Gerhard likewise remembered vividly that the bishops of Western Europe were notably quiet in the face of Hitler. He knew that only one, Bishop Eivind Berggrav of Norway, was imprisoned. Hanns Lilje though imprisoned was not yet a bishop. Pastors, priests and laity were imprisoned for their words, their actions and their stand but no bishops. We all know of Niemöller and the martyr Bonhoeffer. For most of us, this historic knowledge is academic. For Gerhard, , being his father's son and having his personal wartime experience, knowledge of this kind became visceral. He knew for he had experienced that when the tempest comes the sole foundation under our feet is God's Word.

Through his scholarly research Gerhard developed a longtime interest in Syriac texts of the New Testament. He employed a sabbatical in their pursuit. It was an adventurous and potentially dangerous sabbatical for both Joan and Gerhard roaming through parts of the Mideast where likely none of us would venture today. He developed a large photographic collection of these texts to aid in his research. With the assistance of Dr. Ernst Kasemann Gerhard received an introduction to the Patriarch in Istanbul and approached him for letters of introduction to open the libraries of monasteries and gain the support of bishops who might know of such texts. The conversation with the patriarch, as reported by Gerhard, who shared his stories with relish, must have been delightful. While strolling in the garden at the Residence and sitting together on a garden bench the Patriarch inquired why Gerhard was interested in these old texts. The Patriarch commented that, "We already have a good Bible." When he learned that Gerhard was seeking introductions to bishops, the Patriarch asked, "Don't you know that the bishops cause all the trouble in the Church?" As with all of Gerhard's positions and views, his about bishops was grounded in experience, as well as being undergirded by a clear understanding of the Confessions and the New Testament.

Again, Gerhard was never disrespectful of the office of bishop, as he understood it from the New Testament and personal experience, but he did grasp its limitations. When circumstances required, as it did for the development of the seminary on the edge of St. Petersburg, Gerhard was very quick to involve his former students who are now bishops. When he discovered that the ELCA in assembly was being asked to adopt a position that would cause future ELCA support for the ELKRAS Seminary to be in doubt, Gerhard arranged for one of the church's leading bishops, a former student, to address the issue on the floor of the assembly. The threatening position was never adopted. Gerhard certainly understood the strengths and limitations of the offices of archbishop and bishop in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Russia And Other States.

Dr. John Reumann, the noted New Testament scholar now retired from the faculty of the Philadelphia Seminary and with us today, says he considers Gerhard Krodel to have been the best-read New Testament scholar that he knew. He remembers from their many discussions that Gerhard would as a matter of practice have read all the sources. Gerhard exhausted the literature and was always well prepared and equipped to discuss and debate. (In his latter years when he came to our parish in McLean he would arrive early and sit with Joan in the parking lot for 30 minutes or more continuing to prepare himself to speak to our laity in an adult class. He prepared meticulously even though he knew the subject intimately from his years of teaching and he was teaching an adult Sunday School class. Gerhard knew of no other way). At Philadelphia he collaborated with John Reumann on the foundational studies on Peter and Mary which have figured prominently in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogues. At the Philadelphia Seminary the two shared the office of Dean.

Both in Philadelphia and at Gettysburg regardless of his administrative responsibilities as Dean, Gerhard was known for eagerly undertaking every year an ambitious teaching load. He relished special teaching assignments such as that at Philadelphia on "Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity." At Gettysburg he was especially delighted to have developed and taught a course on "New Testament Exegesis and Hermeneutics" in collaboration with Herman Stuempfle.

Gerhard taught his students in the words of Ernst Kasemann that, "Exegesis is the craft of listening to a text, of asking questions, and of seeing differences." Professor Krodel wanted them to know their craft as a combination of the technical skills of language and research with artistic appreciation and subtlety. He was indeed a teacher; a teacher of pastors and a teaching pastor. Few professors identify with our laypeople so well or understood their spiritual needs so clearly. Few indeed, I know of no other, did so much and on such a grand scale while focused on the ministry of pastors ever mindful of the people they would serve. It emerged at every turn of his life as a scholar, a teacher, a founder of a seminary and a pastor of the church.

One student commented, "What we students used to love most is how Gerhard would get so wrapped up in his subject he'd almost be oblivious to the class -- except he'd draw us in with him. His biblical knowledge was awesome. He might read something and then simply offer commentary and comments coming from the vast reservoir of his mind -- quoting scholar after scholar and justifying why he agreed or disagreed."

In all of his work he remembered that he was teaching pastors and providing tools for their ministry among God's people. His goal was to bring the Gospel to the people for whom Christ suffered and died. Along the way he was a major factor in the Faith and Order work of the National Council of Churches and became a leader in the Orthodox-Lutheran Dialogue of the Lutheran World Federation. Productive to say the least, 10 books, more than 50 professional articles of substance and no one has calculated how often Gerhard collaborated and contributed to the work of others, for in this regard he was typically generous.

His fathering the *Proclamation Series* is one of the most significant contributions to preaching in the Lutheran Church in this country made by anyone in the 20th century. Numerous pastors and their congregations profited from the work of Gerhard Krodel and his colleagues. In my meandering journey as a Navy chaplain and later as a parish pastor time and again I have entered an office to discover; especially in the meager library chaplains are able to carry, copies of Gerhard's *Proclamation Series*. Yes, and I also know something of the discipline required to produce that effective series faithfully year after year, season by season, so that it would be available on a timely basis. When those selected to do the work did not do it or it would be done inadequately Gerhard stepped in and the series continued.

His fidelity to Fortress press and then to Augsburg Fortress as a publication house is evidenced by his being one of three editors of The Augsburg Commentary Series that included his two outstanding commentaries on "The Acts of the Apostles" and "Revelation." I came to know Gerhard personally -- I certainly had heard of him by reputation -- when he and his commentary on Acts were recommended for use in our parish in Wyomissing, PA. What a delightful first time encounter that was to see this outstanding scholar in action with laypeople leading them firmly through the Bible's landscape and opening their eyes to the world of the New Testament. Personally, I suspect that if those two commentaries on Acts and Revelation were in the hands of another publisher adept at marketing more of the pastoral world would be using them still. Gerhard was a churchman whatever the bureaucracy. Loyalty and fidelity to the church publication house were in his nature. His faithful zeal and straightforward commitment to serve the pastors and congregations of the Lutheran Church account for his attitude.

Many of you are here today because he devoted himself to you as his students. His earnestness in teaching was such that it is natural to know him through his students. One said, "My image is always a nice smile and warm greeting when I met him on the campus -- carrying about 10 books under his arms." I've heard it said by some who did not know him well that for some reason or other they

suspected he was not fair and open to the ordination of women. Nothing could be further from the truth. Once I was the pastor of one of his former students, a woman in graduate school. The graduate school was not treating her well and Gerhard learned of that. No one could have come to her defense any faster. He was angry. He was passionate. She was a good student he told me, "And, George, you know I am not easy." Well, a few of us had heard something of that. He was proud of her work and it did not sit well with him that another institution and faculty were giving this woman a difficult time. The ordination of women and the proven value of their service in the Church were matters of faith for Gerhard. In his work in Russia he made this abundantly clear.

As Dean for faculty and students alike he maintained high standards based on firm, well thought out convictions, but he remained a pastor. The higher you were in your position within the church the more Gerhard expected of you. His students found him firm but pastoral. President Stuempfle observed how Gerhard always looked out for the underdog. A good listener, a wise counselor and a generous friend it was not unknown for him to use his financial resources to assist a student. He reflected the same thorough concern and generosity as he labored with heart, mind and soul on behalf of the seminary students, pastors and their congregations across Russia.

This pastor, churchman, scholar and teacher happily labored and always carried the interests of Christ's Church in his heart. Truly, he was inherently an evangelist. Gerhard believed in evangelism as few really do. "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith" (Romans 1:16). That verse was his constant companion. *(Gerhard, as an evangelist, enthusiastically supported and gained great inspiration from the ministry of Pastor Manfred Brockmann in the Russian Far East. From the reclaiming of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Vladivostok, across what Gerhard described accurately as the world's largest Lutheran Parish Gerhard called many of us to in some way, however small, join in this great work. Pastor Brockmann's parish in those vast spaces approximated the distance from New York to Los Angeles. Manfred Brockmann has in the course of these years established eight congregations and there are more to come. Gerhard, Joan and those of us who supported them caught by the vision Gerhard laid out for us have been privileged to be part of that).* His evangelical vision routinely included a genuine concern for the well being of the student's, teachers and pastors called to carry God's Word. That was true whether here in Gettysburg, or in St. Petersburg or wherever he saw Christ's work being done and he could join with it. His was a universal vision of Christ's Church. Raising money to pursue the evangelical vision was second nature to him.

A conversation in an airport in the former Soviet Union inspired him to act, for there it became evident that the Lutheran Church in Russia required a seminary.

That seminary exists now in Novosaratovka close to St. Petersburg. Students are emerging in answer to the call of God to serve as pastors among the people who live across the vast spaces of Russia and the surrounding states. For over 12 years Gerhard and Joan supported by Herman Stuempfle and others to be sure, but principally through their own efforts and the Lutheran Board for Mission Support raised one and a half-million dollars. If Gerhard were here he would tell us to the exact penny how much was raised. That's only part of the story. The expenses for this effort they largely bore themselves and their report of the money gathered was transparent and precise to the penny. Their detailed reporting is one of the clear reasons many were drawn to join their effort. Gerhard's interest in the project, as in other of his endeavors, was about more than raising money, although he never thought that trying job beneath him. As in much of his work, he was typically concerned for the well being of all, students, faculty and emerging pastors.

He insisted that the principal building constructed at the Novosaratovka Seminary for the faculty and students be named for Katherine Von Bora Luther. The Katie Luther building would send a message regarding the role and life of women in the Christian Church. He persisted so that the issue of the ordination of women be front and center for Lutherans in Russia. *(For him, as he learned from those who had survived the brutal years, the ordination of women was settled when called by God women led the church during the dark days of Soviet oppression. Then it was, as men were enlisted in the Army, sentenced to the work camps, imprisoned or killed and the surviving elderly and children fled to the forests and mountains to hide or subsisted in their villages and towns, that God called and employed women to carry Word and Sacrament. For Gerhard, God settled, then and there, the ordination of women issue for all time).*

My dear friend John Steinbruck whose work among the homeless and mentally ill at Luther Place Church in Washington, DC has been recognized in Europe and America speaks of Gerhard's kindness to him as a graduate student. For John , Gerhard as Dean and New Testament Professor affirmed the Biblical soundness of the "theology of hospitality/welcoming the stranger." I recall strolling one night around the Luther Place neighborhood in Washington with John and two seminary professors in the 70s. The professors were trying to dissuade John from pursuing such a study in his graduate work. They saw no substance in it, although they admired John's work. John credits Gerhard with having his Doctor of Ministry thesis topic approved against opposition on the subject of "THE CHURCH AS REFUGE -- The Biblical Theology of Hospitality." Today it is common to encounter that theology in Christian literature. It has become central to the ministry of the church among the poorest in our cities. John acting upon his thesis in his parish ministry became one of its pioneers. Further, Gerhard as

Dean acted to ensure that Gettysburg students spent time with John Steinbruck at Luther Place to learn firsthand of that particular kind of pastoral ministry.

Surely, none of us who knew him would ever recognize Gerhard as a Lake Wobegon Lutheran pastor. This is a man of faith and conviction, unafraid to be ardent about the faith that possessed him. This husband, father and grandfather was an administrator, scholar, teacher and pastor, to be sure. But, before all of that which he clearly was and more, Gerhard was a Man, a Man of Faith in Christ. We and countless others are blessed by his having been among us. The dimensions of Gerhard Krodel's life are yet to be measured.

Pastor George Evans, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, McLean, VA