

November 7

Friends—

Another month has gone by! It has been very busy despite having a week off from school during the mid-way point of the semester. Hard to believe the entire school year is over a quarter finished! We have stayed busy with Angie's parents here in the home as her father's health continues to improve due to regular physical therapy appointments and injections. We are glad there have been no complications and just this past weekend they traveled to Minnesota to spend time with their two sons there for a couple weeks. They will come back after that time for some final appointments and checkups before departing permanently. This means they will get to enjoy Thanksgiving (a holiday they do not have in Kenya) with our family, whatever our plans will be.

Chelsea had a birthday on October 19 and it was fun having both sets of grandparents present to celebrate with her! My parents and sister came for a long weekend in the middle of October and we all enjoyed the company as well as getting to introduce them to a St. Louis favorite, Fitz's restaurant, where they bottle and craft their own soda right in house. We were all hoping to have some of their famous ice cream too but we were too full after our delicious meal! Next time.... Chelsea is definitely acting more like a little girl than a toddler these days, with her vocabulary continuing to increase and the things she is able to pick up and notice that she wouldn't have noticed before. It's exciting seeing these milestones approach! Chelsea also had her first trick or treat experience in the neighborhood this Halloween, and she was dressed as a bumblebee. She didn't want to walk so I had to carry her, but she enjoyed getting candy placed in her bucket.

The Exodus & Torah class ended, since most exegetical classes are only half a semester long. Now in its place I have a class on Isaiah & the Prophets, also with Pastor Tom Egger. We will read through the minor prophets (Hosea on through to the end of the Old Testament) in English as well as several portions of Isaiah. Two papers we will write in the class will focus on how the petitions in the Lord's Prayer can be found both throughout the minor prophets as well as in Isaiah. We will not discuss all the minor prophets in class but the first two sessions we did talk about Amos, and now this week we talked about some of the ways Isaiah as a whole book can be broken up and classified. It is a big and complex book with many familiar biblical passages. One reason it may be so familiar is that approximately 1/3 of the Old Testament readings in the lectionary for any given year come from Isaiah.

The Pastoral Care class is probably my favorite class this semester. Every session I always enjoy learning the 'behind-the-scenes' scenarios pastors may face when caring for people, and the pitfalls they can fall into that an average person may not be aware of. We finished our sessions on weddings and then moved on to funerals, creating a mock funeral sermon in the process. We discussed how to best care for people during that difficult time as well as during times of crisis before moving on to the concept of 'idol worship'. This refers to when people come to their pastor with a problem, typically there is something in their own heart they are wanting to satisfy at all costs, and part of our job is to help them see what it is and work on that. During our last session we discussed when a pastor puts someone under the 'minor ban of the church' in which he declares the person cannot take communion at the present time due to unrepentant sin, and also discussed the Seal of the Office of Holy Ministry. This refers to the confidentiality pastors vow to never repeat sins which are confessed to them, even in legal matters which could result in jail time. I really appreciate Pastor Rockenbach's calm but knowledgeable approach in these areas. It is very apparent how using the right tools to care for people in a godly way is important to him. Each session leaves me with a wealth of understanding how to approach difficult situations pastors will face in their ministry.

Systematics just finished a unit on us as creatures being male and female, and how the complementarian relationship between the two is the way God designed it. This includes how each Christian marriage should follow the model of the husband as the head with the wife as the helper, just as Christ is the head of the church and the church gladly following His lead. We discussed how this does not mean the husband makes every decision with the wife going along with everything he says, but that it does fit in with staying in the grooves we were each originally designed for before sin came into the world. This is a very controversial topic which is an uphill battle to fight when dealing with the outside world. Feminism and the gay rights movement are two examples of forces actively at work wanting to destroy this concept. Now this week we have been discussing the concept of justification, the biggest issue Luther and his followers had during the time of the reformation. We are discussing how our Lutheran view differs so greatly from every other church body. Pastor Biermann taught the male female lectures and since I am also in his individual section I have gotten to hear his knowledge quite a bit in this class. He speaks fast but he is also so incredibly knowledgeable that it makes it easy for students to want to push themselves to grow theologically and become as passionate about the material as he is. He and Pastor Rockenbach in the counseling class have very different approaches but I feel like it gives me the best of both worlds. I would highly encourage any future seminary students to take as many classes with either of them as they can!

History of the Reformation class has gotten us up to the death of Luther and now we are just starting in with some of the conflicts that arose in Germany and the rest of Europe after that time. The early Lutherans had problems of their own and couldn't always agree on what Luther meant with various concepts or what he *would* have said on a topic were he still alive. Pastor Dost was nice enough to invite everyone in the class to dinner at his house, scattered over a few evenings, during the past few weeks. Angie and I went last weekend and we both enjoyed it; the food was delicious! It was our first evening out just as a couple in a long time and having social time with other adults was very enjoyable. He is a very quick-witted person so we never knew what kind of one-liners or comebacks he would be sharing, and it made for a humorous and enjoyable evening!

At Zion in Maryland Heights I have continued to perform the liturgy on a regular basis. I will have my third opportunity to preach the first Sunday of December. Pastor Femmel wants to spend the four Sundays in Advent going through the first chapter in each gospel, so the one I will have will focus on Mark 1. I have been brainstorming ideas and concepts and am just now starting to write down a manuscript. It will be nice seeing it all come together over the next month!

This has still been a busy semester, I feel like there's always something more to do. But as I have mentioned earlier it is all worth it and all is valuable to the pastoral formation process. We hope you are enjoying the change in seasons and are looking forward to being thankful towards what God has given you in your life during the month of November.

Kevin Peterson
Angela, Chelsea