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## The "Janus" Issue

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## The “Janus” Issue

This is the “Janus” issue of *Word & World*. If you remember your ancient gods and goddesses, you might recall the god Janus, who was for the Romans the god of transitions, of endings and beginnings. The Romans associated Janus with doorways and gates, and passages of all kinds, temporal and physical. He was portrayed as having two faces, one to look forward and the other looking back, just like we humans are often prone to look both to the past as well as the future at such times of transition. Romans invoked Janus at significant points of the human lifecycle (birth, marriage, and death), as well as the cycles of the year (planting and harvest). He was the god of the beginning and end of armed conflicts, thus the doors of his temple were opened and closed ceremonially to signal the beginning and ending of wars.

This is the Janus issue because in this number we are looking both forward and backward. At the end of our thirty-sixth year of publishing the journal *Word & World* we are at a significant point in our history, especially with a transition in editorial leadership. Founded in 1981 as the journal of the faculty of Luther Seminary, its intention was (and is still), to be as its subtitle indicates, a journal of “Theology for Christian Ministry.” But there are other such journals out there that wish to address the same area, so the founders of the journal wrestled with developing a guiding theme, one that they signaled in the title of the new journal, *Word & World*.

To think back to our founding theme, we have reprinted the initial editorial from the first issue in 1981, written by the first editor, Jim Burtness. This is a fascinating piece, because it shows the thought and care that went into planning the new publication, including a prolonged discussion of what the title of the journal would be, and how it would signal the approach to theology for Christian ministry that has been the cornerstone of this work over thirty-six subsequent years. Every word of the journal’s new title was discussed, even the ampersand (&), and every word has meaning. As we think of the future of *Word & World*, we look back, Janus-wise, to this founding and guiding document.

But of course, things have not remained stagnant in the world or in the Christian ministry over the years since 1981. Having been launched under this theme, the journal has been faithfully produced since 1987 under the leadership of Fred Gaiser, now Emeritus Professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary. More than anyone else, Fred has been the one to run with the guiding theme of the journal—not just to continue the original vision, but to shape it and mold it over the years.

With nearly thirty years and well over one hundred issues, he has skillfully directed the journal and artfully shaped its content and approach, with the able assistance of the journal staff and faculty board members, as well as with an outside Advisory Council. Fred built this journal into a well-respected and influential publication, and established it firmly; it is a daunting challenge to those of us who will follow him to continue the quality of this publication. As a means of thinking about how this journal has developed over the years, Fred has written an article for this issue reflecting back on the decades of his leadership, and how the journal has grown and developed, and how it has come to embody the theme in its title, "Word & World." He also looks forward, and suggests how a renewed appreciation of this theme might help carry the journal forward into subsequent decades of publication.

But though the views of those who have guided the journal editorially are, of course, important in themselves, they are not a complete view. When we chose the theme of this issue, "Word and Word," the journal's board intended to broaden its horizons and receive the viewpoints of a range of different contributors, input on both the journal itself, and on the theme of others who might shape the future direction of our publication. We chose a varied selection of contributors to gain as wide a set of viewpoints as possible, both within the Luther Seminary world and outside of it, and asked them to comment on and expand on the first two articles by Burtness and Gaiser.

For a view from within the Luther seminary community we have a contribution from Dean Craig Koester, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, Professor and Asher O. and Carrie Nasby Chair of New Testament. Our Council of Editorial Advisors is represented by a Roman Catholic Old Testament scholar, Dr. Katherine Hayes, who teaches at the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception, Huntington, New York. Another view comes from Bishop Jessica Crist of the Montana Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, who has a distinguished career teaching and leading in this denomination. For a Lutheran perspective outside of the ELCA, we have an article from Dr. Robert Benne, a Lutheran ethicist and theologian, who is the Jordan-Trexler Professor Emeritus, Roanoke College, and Professor of Christian Ethics, Institute of Lutheran Theology, Brookings, South Dakota. Finally, to balance out the generations and get a newer perspective on the theme, we have an article from a clergy couple who are recent Luther Seminary graduates, Pastors Tim and Rachel Wrenn. Tim is serving Christ Lutheran Church in Marietta, Georgia, and Rachel is beginning doctoral studies in Hebrew Bible at Emory University. We hope that these different perspectives will provide for lively and thoughtful reading, and help us think about the future of this theme and of this journal.

After this section, we have several different articles that round out our issue. The first is an appreciation of Editor Gaiser and his work from a longtime colleague, Mark Throntveit, who is the Book Review Editor of this journal, and

professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary. Then as a bit of an *homage* to our retiring editor, I have written a piece on the fifth-century Vandal king Gaiseric. Explanations for the theme of this article can be found at the beginning of the article itself, but what intrigued me was how quickly this historical piece came to be a reflection on the theme “Word and World,” and how the experiences of the Christians in fifth-century North Africa can be instructive for those of twenty-first-century North America. Finally, as an ongoing theme at *Word & World*, we have an article on the serious challenges facing the Lutheran Church in Northern Nigeria, where the Word and the World are colliding in very dangerous ways. The author, Ibrahim Bitrus, is the Nigerian Theologian in Residence at the Minneapolis Area Synod and formerly lecturer at Bronnum Lutheran Seminary in Yola, Nigeria. Dr. Bitrus has a PhD in systematic theology from Luther Seminary.

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As the incoming editor of *Word & World*, it might be appropriate for me to introduce myself. My name is Mark Granquist, and I am Associate Professor of the History of Christianity at Luther Seminary, a position I have held since 2007. Prior to coming to Luther, I had taught for fifteen years on the college level—eight years at St. Olaf College (1992–2000) and seven years at Gustavus Adolphus College (2000–2007). I am an ordained pastor in the ELCA, having served a parish call at Bethel Lutheran Church, Rochester, Minnesota (1988–1992). I have also served shorter-term parish assignments in congregations in Connecticut, Illinois, and Minnesota, in congregations that ranged in size from less than one hundred members to forty-five hundred members. My area of specialization in the history of Christianity is the modern and American areas, and my specialty is the history of Lutherans in North America, which is where my research and publication is focused. My degrees are from St. Olaf (BA), Yale University Divinity School (MDiv) and the University of Chicago (PhD). I live in Northfield, Minnesota, with my wife Kathy, who is Associate Registrar at St. Olaf College, and we have two adult children.

Though the prospect of taking over as editor of *Word & World* has, at some points, given me a few sleepless nights, I am looking forward to the challenge. Certainly Fred Gaiser is a very difficult act to follow; he has established a strong precedent for editorial excellence that will be very difficult to match. I can only say that I look forward to the task and will ask from you, the readers, as much advice and input as you can manage. The original vision of this journal, as expressed in these various articles, is to provide serious and reflective theological resources for ministry. The intent is to provide thoughtful theological articles that challenge the reader, without being too technical or obtuse. We also hope to produce articles that connect with the real needs of parishes and their leaders, without being simply “how-to” pieces. Certainly not all articles that we publish will straddle these lines completely; there may be articles that seem too technical or too practical. My hope

is that in the overall body of the work you will find a rich set of research and writing that will enrich your ministry and your understanding of the faith.

It would be very good to hear from you when you have a chance. Suggestions for improvement and compliments will be equally entertained and welcomed. Please let me know if there are articles or themes for issues that you would appreciate seeing; our planning goes out a year or so ahead, but I will attempt to see that your input is included in our mix. If you would like to contact me, please do so at:

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Before closing I would like to thank those connected to the journal for their help and input in this editorial transition: the faculty of Luther Seminary, the journal's Editorial Board and staff, and the members of the Advisory Council. Special thanks to the production staff, Sylvia Ruud (Production Editor and Office Manager) and Jennifer Wojciechowski (Editorial Fellow), who do the hard work of producing this journal, and on whose wonderful efforts I depend immensely. Finally, thanks to Fred Gaiser, who has patiently assisted me in this transition, and for whose editorial wisdom I will seek, no doubt often. Lutheran theology states that all vocations, even the vocation of editor, when done in the service of God, are sacred. I take this as a calling, and will do my best to honor and complete it.

—M.G.