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## A Tribute to Frederick J. Gaiser: Upon His Retirement as Editor of Word & World

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# A Tribute to Frederick J. Gaiser *upon His Retirement as Editor of* Word & World

MARK THRONTVEIT

**W**ord & World was launched in 1981 under the visionary leadership and careful shepherding of early editors James Burtness, Dennis Ormseth, and especially Arland Hultgren. It is almost impossible, however, for many of us who are associated with Luther Seminary to conceive of our journal without thinking of Frederick J. Gaiser. Fred became editor of the journal in 1987 and turned the reins over to Mark Granquist in 2016, having established it as the publication of which we are so proud today. He did this by vetting submissions with an eye for potential as well as quality; publishing timely theological articles that were sensitive to the future needs of parish pastors; and possessing both the academic and administrative skills to run the journal and shape its profile.

During his thirty years as Editor of *Word & World*, Fred facilitated the publication of 28 years worth of issues devoted to individual topics of “theology for Christian ministry,” as the subtitle of the journal boldly declares and as Fred tirelessly proclaimed. This amounts to roughly 625 articles, not counting over 100 offerings in our *Face to Face* feature (different or opposing views on current questions in church and world); over 100 *Texts in Context* exegetical studies (providing preachers and teachers with reflections, insights, methods, and models to

*This tribute to Frederick Gaiser at the end of his term as editor of Word & World comes from a longtime colleague and collaborator in the publication of this journal. Mark Throntveit is the Book Review Editor of this journal, and the Elva B. Lovell Professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary.*

help in proclaiming the biblical message in a particular context); and more than 600 substantial book reviews. Impressive as these numbers are, that which continues to amaze me is the intelligence and clarity of purpose with which Fred has developed the journal into what it is today.

Indeed, as I began to write this tribute, it occurred to me that “editor” might not adequately capture Fred’s journalistic vocation. “Conductor” more accurately conveys his contribution, at least to my mind. Fred was a conductor, a “maestro,” and as that term suggests, a masterful one. He didn’t just compile an issue, he orchestrated a symphony in which a theme was presented or a question was explored in enough depth to foster disciplined theological investigation, without sacrificing meaningful applications to the life of the parish.

As if that were not enough, Fred is a writer’s writer. He, himself, contributed 14 articles, 6 *Texts in Context* studies, 6 book reviews, 2 *Face to Face* statements, and 1 *Word & World Lecture*. But I will always remember the editorials, sometimes called “Perspectives,” 106 little jewels of theological insight couched in savvy, perceptive, and often wryly humorous observations of our world and its need for a savior. In an age of digital dissonance and superficial deference to the culture, his editorials fuse elegant style and poignant prose with broad historical perspective and prophetic intuition. As an embodiment of the journal’s finest qualities, Fred exemplifies its respect for learning, vibrant piety, and deep concern for church and cosmos...all qualities that come to life in those marvelous editorials.

No tribute would be complete without mention of the journal’s articulation of itself, found on our website, and rehearsed before every annual planning meeting, every Word & World Lecture—indeed, at every possible opportunity with great Gaiserian gusto:

*Word & World: Theology for Christian Ministry*

At *Word & World* we take our conjunctions and prepositions seriously.

*We are Word and World*

Things flow both ways across an “and.” Word is in conversation with world. We seek to inform and to be informed. We speak and we listen. We welcome the open connection because we believe both word and world belong to God.

*We are Theology for Christian Ministry*

There is direction in a “for.” Theology is for the work of God in the world; it is for the ministry of the church; it is for the gospel. We recognize that if theology is for ministry, neither theology nor ministry will remain unchanged. Such change we do not fear for it is the change that comes with life and growth.

We invite you to join us in a conversation about theology and ministry, about word and world, that has—we think—both proper openness and clear direction.

And Fred, we thank you for your enthusiastic efforts to draw us into that conversation and keep us focused on that vital intersection between word and world, for Jesus’ sake. ⊕