



Lutheran Historical Society

Of the Mid-Atlantic

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

Lutheran Historical Society announces A.R. Wentz Prize Winner

The Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic announces that the Reverend Joel Otto is the winner of the 2019 A.R. Wentz Prize in American Lutheran History for his paper "The Church Grows under the Cross: Wisconsin Synod Mission Expansion into the Sunshine States in the 1950s" in the award's PH.D./M.A. category. Otto is a professor of church history and education as well as the Dean of Students at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. Otto expressed his appreciation and gratitude to the society for the award, which is offered each year for papers addressing Lutheranism in North America. One of the Wentz prize judges noted that "at a time when many mainline denominations have seen a decline in growth and memberships, Otto's paper examines how the church in the past sought to grow and expand in new ways. His analysis offers today's church some insight and inspiration."

Abdel Ross Wentz, for whom the award is named, was a leading figure in 20th century Lutheranism. From 1916-1956 he was a professor of Church History and later President of Gettysburg Theological Seminary. He was the first Vice-President of the Lutheran World Federation and the lead writer of its first constitution. The Wentz family established an endowment to provide prize money for the best historical paper on Lutheranism in North America. The prize can be awarded each year in two categories: 1) first degree seminarian and 2) M.A or PH.D. graduate students. The prize is in the amount of \$2,500. Read more about the prize and the work of the Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic on its web site: www.lutheranhistoricalsociety.com

Otto was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and is a graduate of Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin (now Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota). He received his theological and pastoral training at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and served his vicarage at Sola Fide Lutheran Church in Lawrenceville, Georgia. In 1995 he was ordained subsequently has served as pastor to congregations in Midland, Michigan, Manitowoc and Minocqua, Wisconsin and in San Diego, California. Last year Trinity Evangelical Divinity School awarded him a Master of Theology degree in church history. Otto is married to Laura Herman Otto and they have been blessed with three children and one grandchild.

The society also announces a call for papers for the 2020 prize. Any first-degree seminary student regardless of denominational affiliation and anyone enrolled in a higher degree program at the M.A. or Ph.D. level are eligible to apply. Paper topics should be historical papers on some aspect of Lutheranism in North America. Full details can be found on the society's webpage.

Questions can be directed to Pastor Stephen Herr, President of the Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic, 717-334-5212, info@lutheranhistoricalsociety.com or Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic, 61 Seminary Ridge, Gettysburg, PA 17325.

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