In 2016, I started the annual class letter with a story of a tornado hitting my current community of Litchfield, MN. I tried to make the connection to community and used it as an example of how Concordia reminded me of a great community.

Well, it is 2019 and I have another tornado story to start out the letter. About a month ago a tornado touched down near the farm that I grew up on. It initially touched down about quarter mile from my childhood home and started for the home. Fortunately, the path took it through the woods behind the home, leaving the house untouched but many trees destroyed. The tornado continued across the countryside and eventually made its way to my grandpa’s farm. My grandpa passed away 10 years ago and currently nobody lives on the farm. However, it is still an active farmstead with many structures and machinery on site. This farm was not as fortunate. Nearly every structure on the site was destroyed, including a beautiful barn that had stood for over hundred years. Nobody was hurt and things can be replaced, so we feel very blessed.

So, what is the point of this tornado story? Maybe it is not all that clever, but I tell the story to let you know that if you missed one event, if you wait long enough it will probably happen again. So, if you missed the class reunion in 2014, you are in luck. It is 2019 and we have another reunion planned this fall. More on that later...

Music

Dr. René Clausen announced that he will retire following the 2019-20 academic year, concluding his service as professor of music and conductor of The Concordia Choir. Clausen is a leader in choral music as both a conductor and a composer. He is the artistic director of the Concordia Christmas Concerts. In addition to composing arrangements and original pieces for Concordia ensembles, he has written dozens of commissioned compositions including “MEMORIAL” and “Crying for a
Dream” for the American Choral Directors Association. Clausen was also commissioned by Concordia to create a major work in observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The work is titled “The Passion of Jesus Christ” and premiered at Orchestra Hall in 2017. President William Craft noted in an announcement to the Concordia community that throughout his work at the college Clausen has lived the mission of The Concordia Choir “to uphold a sacred choral tradition through the uncompromising and unrelenting collaborative pursuit of musical integrity and spiritual expression.”

The Concordia Choir completed a highly successful tour through the Pacific Northwest in March. The tour featured concerts in Washington, Oregon, Montana, North Dakota, and Minnesota. The Choir also had engagements with ten high school choirs, as well as The Choir of the West at Pacific Lutheran University and a collaboration concert with The Singers – Minnesota Choral Artists at the Ordway in St. Paul. Work is now being done to plan the Choir’s 2020 tour to the Southeast United States. Updates and more information can be found at www.TheConcordiaChoir.org.

The Concordia Orchestra completed a very successful fall domestic tour with performances in Appleton, Wausau and Chippewa Falls in Wisconsin and Roseville, Sartell and Brainerd in Minnesota. Repertoire included Symphony No. 3 by Florence Price, Scheherazade by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and Concerto for Trombone by Jim Pugh, which featured Concordia Professor of Low Brass Dr. Nathaniel Dickey on trombone. Also joining the tour was guest conductor Christoph Rehl-Fankhauser, professor of conducting at the Lucerne University of Music in Switzerland.

The Concordia Band was invited to perform at both the Minnesota Music Educators Association Mid-Winter Clinic in Minneapolis and the North Dakota Music Educators Association Conference in Bismarck. In addition, the band was also invited to be the featured collegiate band at the Westman Honour Band concert at Brandon University in Brandon, Manitoba. As part of their annual domestic tour, the band performed a joint concert with the Encore Wind Ensemble in St. Paul, MN as well as concerts in St. Anthony Village, Albany and Staples-Motley, all in Minnesota. The band is in the beginning stages of planning their international tour to Spain in May of 2020.

**New Hires**

Concordia added two critical new leaders in the Career Center this year. Kris Olson joined the College as the new Director of the Career Center in October 2018. Jill Wenger, a Barnesville native, was hired in the role of Assistant Director of the Career Center in March 2019.

Kris began her career in Higher Education spent several years in Higher Education at NDSU and Concordia before making a career switch. She began working for Cargill, Inc as a Corporate Training Consultant, Training Curriculum Specialist, a Member of a Global Realignment Team, and a Recruiting Manager. Following her time at Cargill, Kris founded her own consulting business. Kris is an experienced professional with over 30 years of progressive experience in Higher Education, Corporate Business and Consulting.
Jill is an experienced professional with progressive experience within the City of Moorhead ranging from City Clerk, Assistant City Manager, and most recently, Human Resource Director. Jill brings great insight into public service, the local Fargo-Moorhead area, the Restorative Justice process, and recruitment best practices.

Katie Nystuen was hired as our Health Services Coordinator this year. Part of her role is to guide students in making choices regarding their healthcare needs, and connecting them to the many quality providers in our community. Though direct care is not the focus of the Health Services Office, she is First Aid, CPR and AED certified, and can assist with triage and referral to an appropriate medical facility should an urgent situation arise, as can our Public Safety Office. One of her goals is to be more proactive and holistic regarding health and wellness programming on campus.

Dallas Fossum joined Concordia as the new Director for Facilities Management in March. Dallas is an experienced director of facilities management and has, with his teams, completed more than $50 million in renovations, new constructions, infrastructure, and deferred maintenance.

Dr. Jill Abbott has been appointed Deputy to the President at Concordia College, effective June 3, 2019. Dr. Abbott holds a bachelor’s degree in literature/language arts education, a master’s in counseling and human resource development, and a doctorate in educational administration. She currently serves as the associate vice president of academics at Minnesota State Community and Technical College. Dr. Abbott will serve as a member of the college cabinet and will continue the good work of her predecessor Tracey Moorhead as liaison to our Board of Regents. As Deputy to the President, she will work with me to ensure the fulfillment of the new college plan following its affirmation by the Board of Regents, to represent the college in building strong local and regional partnerships for mutual success, and to position Concordia as mission driven institution of national significance.

**Athletics**

In the spring of 2018, Concordia had only one team – women’s basketball – with a female head coach. Fast forward one year, and with the hiring of new volleyball head coach Faith Dooley, the Cobbers now have 5 additional female head coaches mentoring student/athletes. Dooley, who was an All-American at the University of North Dakota, joins women’s golf head coach Kari Weidner-Ceniceros, Maureen Greiner of women’s hockey, Rebecca O’Shurak from women’s soccer and NDSU All-American Laura Januszewski who coaches both the men’s and women’s cross country teams. The rise of female head coaches was recognized by University of Minnesota’s Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport in their 2018-19 coaching report card that cited Concordia as the top college in the MIAC for the increase in female head coaches over the past year.
Concordia men’s track and field junior Matt Bye, Moorhead, won the heptathlon at this winter’s MIAC Indoor Championship Meet and went on to finish 11th in the event at the NCAA National Indoor Meet held in Boston, Mass. Bye won the MIAC title with the second highest point total in school history.

The Cobber men’s hockey team earned its seventh consecutive berth in the MIAC playoffs this season. Concordia finished conference play with nine league wins which was the most since the 2013 season. Sophomore forward Tyler Bossert, Fargo, led the MIAC in scoring and went on to earn All-American Second Team honors to become the ninth All-American in program history.

Ways to Engage

What does a lifelong Cobber look like?

Being a part of the Cobber Alumni Network is about staying involved and giving back to future students, feeling connected and proudly sharing it with those around you. When you do something in all four of these categories, let us know and we’ll send you an exclusive Loyal Cobber gift!

• CONNECT: Stay Informed (www.cord.edu/classnotes or 218.299.3743) Update your information online or by phone to know what’s happening among alumni and with the college.

• ENGAGE: Get Involved (www.cord.edu/engage) Provide meaningful experiences for students and participate in alumni events, programs and teams.

• SUPPORT: Make an Impact (www.concordiacollege.edu/giving/) Give to student scholarships and campus projects to ensure educational enrichment for current and future Cobbers.

• SHARE: Show Your Cobber Pride and interact on social media using #cordmn, show off your alma mater swag and tell future Cobbers about your Concordia experience.

Cobbers for Cobbers: Your Gifts at Work

The Concordia Annual Fund allows the college to meet emerging needs, explore new opportunities and respond to unexpected challenges. The gift you give today supports work of the college immediately, funding areas of scholarships and financial aid, academic programs, institutional operations and student services.

This past year, our class had 10.73% participation and gave $6,962.60. Since graduation, our class has given $209,339.80 in outright gifts. This is absolutely amazing!! THANK YOU!!

Just a reminder, if you are interested in helping out future Cobbers you can donate at cord.edu/give. You have the option of a single time donation, or an ongoing monthly donation. Every year I talk to students at my school and get updates on what it will cost them to go to college. The sticker price is often very shocking, but I am always amazed when students talk about what it will actually cost.
them to go to Concordia because of the financial aid packages made available because of generation donations from alumni like you. Let’s continue to help pay it forward.

Homecoming

Another year goes by and another Cobber Homecoming is on the horizon. This is a special year as we will be celebrating our 15 Year Reunion. Homecoming is schedule for October 10-13, 2019 and will include a number of activities. For a complete list of activities, be sure to go to https://www.concordiacollege.edu/alumni/homecoming/ for all the details. As many of you know I coach volleyball in Litchfield, and this make is difficult to get back up to Concordia for Homecoming. However, a few classmates you may remember have graciously stepped up to help organize and lead some of the reunion events. Casey Bartz and Joe Halvorson are working hard to help make the 15 Year Reunion a great one. The reunion events will begin with breakfast on the morning of October 12th in the Wall Lounge (formerly known as the Tabernacle) in the Knutson Campus Center at 9:00am. That evening there will be a social at Brewhalla in Fargo starting at 7:30pm. You will need to register for both of these events at https://concordiacollege.regfox.com/2019registration if you plan to attend. Be sure to put both of events on your schedule.

In Closing

I hope that everyone is doing well and hopefully many of you will be able to attend the reunion this fall. I also hope this is the last letter that I use a tornado to start off my letter. God bless!

Sincerely,

Darin Swenson