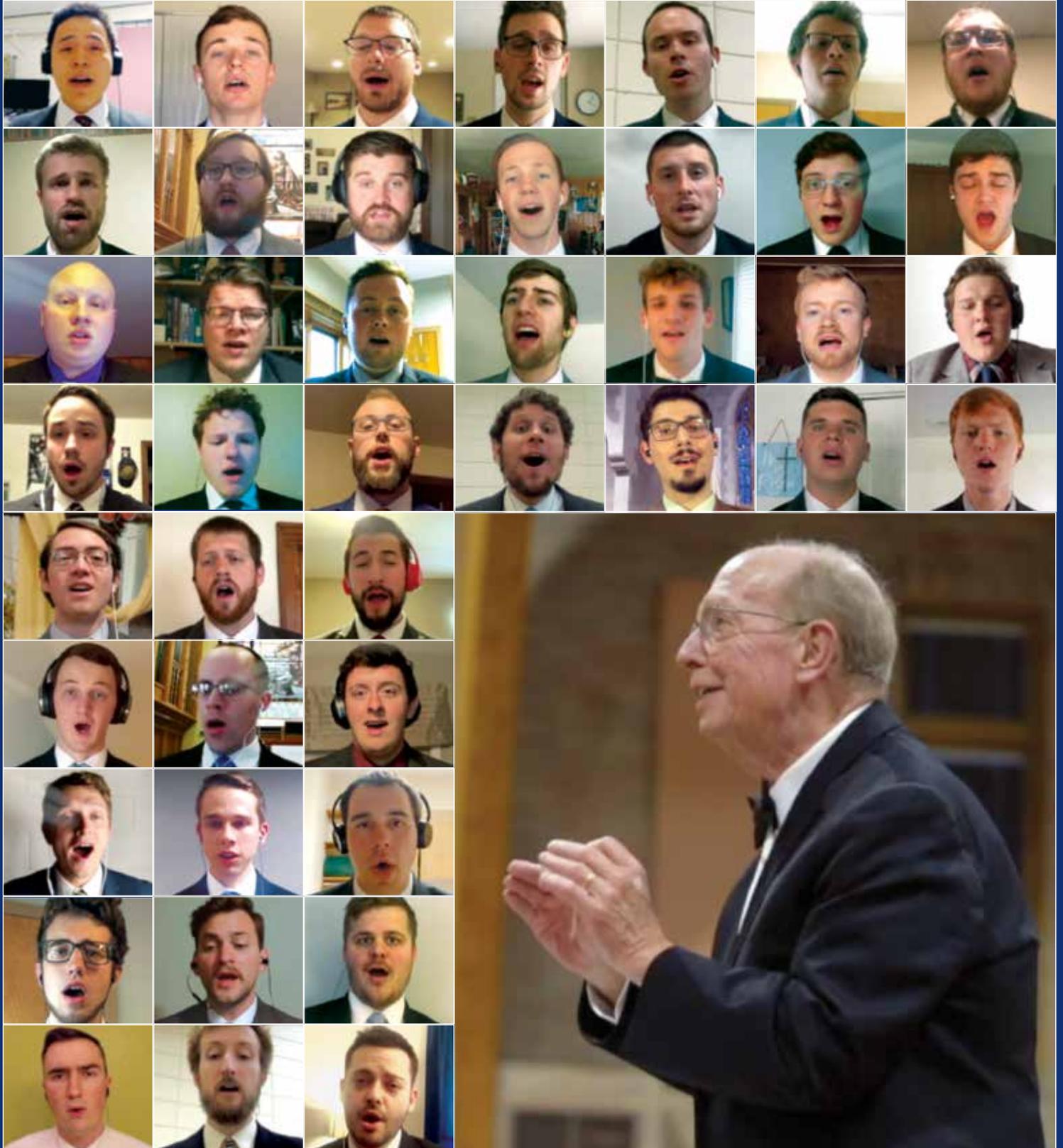




Κηρυξάτε PREACH THE GOSPEL

A MAGAZINE OF WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY





2020-21 EVENTS

AUGUST 24	Opening Service
SEPTEMBER 21	WLS Alumni Society Annual Meeting (virtual)
SEPTEMBER 21-22	Symposium (virtual)
DECEMBER 13	Christmas Concert
JANUARY 4-15	Winterim
FEBRUARY 2-4	Mission and Ministry
MAY 20	Call Day and Graduation Concert
MAY 21	Graduation

ON THE COVER

This year's graduation and call day service took place online. The service concluded with Prof. James Tiefel directing a virtual choir singing "Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See." The cover captures that special moment and the months of online study that preceded it.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- ‡ Photographs provided by Lori Guse. Sincere appreciation for the other photographers who contributed pictures for this issue. Also, thank you to all the authors for their work on this issue.
- ‡ A special thanks to Linda Buxa, communications coordinator, and Lori Guse, mission advancement coordinator.

Κηρυξάτε: Preach the Gospel—a magazine of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Prof. Bradley Wordell, managing editor; Prof. John Hartwig, Prof. Samuel Degner, editorial board. Editorial office: 11831 N Seminary Drive, Mequon WI 53092; (262) 242-8100.

© 2020 by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Printed in the USA. Reproduction of any original article or photo for use in a WELS church, school, or organization does not require permission of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Such use should credit the source.

Published annually under ISSN 1557-7279.





4



6



7



8



10



14



15



16



17



18

20

22

23

IN THIS ISSUE

VOL. 17

20/20 Vision for 2020 and Beyond 4

The Gospel Is at the Center of Our Library Vision 6

Planning for Blessings 7

Continuing Education Makes Teachers Better 8

Evident Blessings from Our Ascended Savior 10

Only God Knows 14

From Law to Gospel 15

“Not What I Envisioned” 16

No Pastor Is an Island 17

Unforeseen Blessings Through Grow in Grace 18

Longtime Seminary Family Members Retire 20

The Great Giver Moves Us to Give to His Mission 22

Only God’s Vision Is 20/20 23

20/20 VISION FOR

The 2019–2020 school year didn't go the way faculty, staff, and students envisioned it. In August 2019, as the year began, no one on campus was pondering the possibility of a novel coronavirus spreading across the world. Instead, the calendar was established and schedules were published. Professors and students envisioned doing what they had done the year before: gathering in seminary classrooms each day, studying God's Word together, and talking about how pastors serve people with Word and Sacrament. Everyone expected that the year would go as planned.

That expectation was based on the faulty assumption that human beings, because they can establish plans and put items on a calendar, control their own lives. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lord taught everyone on the seminary campus to see things differently. James, the brother of our Lord, warned against the unrecog-

nized pride that leads people to think that whatever they envision they can bring to completion. "You do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes" (James 4:14). We did not know, as the school year began, that classes during the final quarter of the year would have to be held online. We had no idea there would be no in-person graduation service at the close of the year. The lesson is obvious. Sinful human beings, even those covered with the righteousness of Christ through faith, do not control the future.

God's people are welcome to plan and set a vision for the future. Our vision, however, must be placed before God as a prayer: "Lord, this is what we see ourselves doing. But these are only our plans. If our plans serve your loving and saving purpose, then bring them to fruition." That's the attitude

James encourages regarding any vision we set: "Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that'" (James 4:15). We humble ourselves before the Lord, acknowledging our inability to see what he sees. We confess that we can only plan. It's the Lord who directs everything according to his perfect will. With both heart and mouth we gladly say, "Lord willing, the vision we set and the plans we make for the 2020–2021 school year will come to pass."

Vision comes naturally to mind when one hears "2020." Those of us who need the assistance of corrective lenses recognize that 20/20 vision is a gift from God. The Lord who could give that blessing directly has chosen to work through eye doctors and many others to do so. He does the same thing when it comes to 20/20 spiritual vision—he grants it indirectly, through his gospel, which he places in the mouths of his gospel ministers. The seminary's vision is to be the Lord's instrument for granting the blessing of 20/20 spiritual vision to men who will proclaim his gospel as pastors and missionaries.

Since the Lord chooses to give the blessing of 20/20 spiritual vision through his Word, as it is read, heard, and pondered, life at the seminary centers around the living Word of Christ. In his final letter, the Apostle Paul directed Timothy to prepare future gospel servants who would be able to carry on the work after he had finished the race: "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to



Whether learning in the classroom, in early field experience, vicar year in congregations, or online during a pandemic, students stay focused on their goal of preaching the gospel.

2020 AND BEYOND

teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2). Timothy was to train men who knew and believed in Jesus as their Savior and could be counted on to proclaim the truth they had received. At the end of the following chapter, St. Paul explained that a thorough study of the Holy Scripture must be at the heart of that preparation. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16–17). The Spirit who gave the writers of Scripture the thoughts and words they were to write also equips future pastors to minister to—and with—the people of God.

Though much has changed at the seminary from its founding in 1863 to the 2020–2021 school year, the life-giving, clear-vision-granting Word of God remains at the center of it all. Faculty, students, and staff have the privilege of gathering in the chapel each morning to receive the Word and to respond to it with thanksgiving. Each of the curriculum’s areas of study—Biblical Theology, Historical Theology, Systematic Theology, and Practical Theology—aims to help pastors and future pastors see more clearly.

As professors and students together reflect on God’s Word, the Lord is at work. He’s continually seeking to remove the scales from their eyes, so that they might see themselves as they really are. Though the sinful flesh wishes to see only the goodness of his heart, the Lord speaks the painful truth, “The heart is deceitful above all

things” (Jeremiah 17:9), so that the individual must view himself the way the Apostle did: “the worst” (1 Timothy 1:15) of sinners. When the Lord speaks his word of absolution to the future pastor who sees his sinfulness more clearly than he ever has in the past, then the individual can see Jesus properly. Jesus is not the Lamb who takes away a few sins from those who have been mostly good. He’s rather the one whose righteousness covers the worst of sinners. The eyes that see Christ as the Savior of all function the way God desires them to.

The Lord who enables future pastors to see themselves clearly and to see Jesus clearly then begins to transform their vision of others. The individual who confesses, “I am the worst of sinners,” cannot look down on others, as if they were worse. If faith in Christ is a gift of God, completely undeserved, a pastor cannot act as if he is more worthy of love than the person who is impenitently engaging in homosexual activity, for example. Instead, the Lord moves the future pastor, in light of Christ’s death for all, to “regard no one from a worldly point of view” (2 Corinthians 5:16).

As professors and students consider God’s Word together, the Lord opens their eyes to see abundant opportunities for gospel ministry all around them. Proclaiming law and gospel to the world cannot be reserved for a more convenient time, because “now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

The seminary’s vision for 2020 and beyond is to be the Lord’s instrument to correct the vision of men who will



President Treptow welcomed attendees to the seminary’s annual symposium.

serve as pastors in our synod. That means seeking, through the preaching and teaching of God’s Word, to form Christians who view themselves as sinners and see Jesus as their perfect Savior. It also means helping pastors and future pastors see all the people around them as objects of God’s love in Christ, whom they have the privilege of serving with the gospel until Jesus returns. †

President Earle Treptow teaches systematic theology.

THE GOSPEL IS AT THE CENTER OF OUR LIBRARY VISION

“Does a library still need to have books?” goes the half-serious question. I’d say the answer is yes, but that there’s more to it. For one thing, publishing has changed dramatically in recent years. For example, you or I can go online to publish our own 144-page paperback via print-on-demand and have it a week later for \$4 per copy plus shipping. It’s only slightly more expensive to make it available through an online bookseller like Amazon. As a result, a huge number of specialty titles are available to theological libraries. End users, of course, may find it more convenient to order these titles directly from booksellers or as e-books, and today’s seminary student also has access to reference volumes and study tools through the Logos Bible Software application and other electronic products.



Professor Nathan Ericson spent the 2019-2020 school year studying for a masters degree as well as becoming more familiar with the seminary’s library.

All of those changes and options can be a bit confusing, which is why it may be helpful to view the role of our seminary library in more general terms. Library science today focuses on *access to information* and *preservation of information*. Students and faculty still need information, even though the ways of delivering information are changing. Print books are still part of the picture, but now there are multiple layers of electronic access that libraries must provide. These layers include subscriptions to electronic journals, databases, indexes, and other reference tools, and access to collections that exist in other libraries. Making our own library’s unique resources discoverable and available online is another important part of the exchange of information in today’s world. While a library’s books and print journals are what everyone sees first, much of the work of a library today goes on behind the scenes to make

digital information resources accessible. In addition, part of our mission, in cooperation with WELS Archives, is to preserve information resources for future generations.

To prepare for my work as library director, I’ve enrolled in the Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) program at UW-Milwaukee, one of the leading US public university MLIS programs. The seminary provided me with a full year before the retirement of current Library Director John Hartwig to get a head start on the program, during which time I completed seventy percent of the credits required. It’s been an interesting year, with my family continuing to live in Oshkosh, Wis., where I previously served. I’m taking most of my UW-Milwaukee classes online and I commute to the seminary to become more familiar with the library’s collections and operations.

As for the MLIS program itself, the UW-Milwaukee School of Information Studies is flexible in offering program options that students can customize to their interests and professional needs. Many students in the program already work in libraries. Required courses cover the historical principles and values of library science, such as patron privacy and intellectual freedom, and also the theory of information organization and retrieval, such as how materials are cataloged and discovered in both the print and digital worlds. Elective courses that I’ve chosen have focused on digital libraries, instructional technology, reference services, and collection management.

What’s in store for the seminary library? Further development of our essay file and other digital collections is key to providing students, faculty, and other members of our constituency with the resources they need. Student workers will continue to pursue digitization projects that make key print resources available online. Purchase-on-demand programs, which add print and electronic resources to the library based on user requests, may be worth exploring. We will continue to evaluate the costs and benefits of joining a consortium of private college libraries in the Milwaukee area. Inside the library, students have expressed an interest in having more collaborative spaces available for small groups. Whatever the future holds, our mission, “preach the gospel,” involves students having access to information resources that help them both comprehend the gospel for themselves and apply the gospel to our world. †

Professor Nathan Ericson began his work as library director in summer 2020.

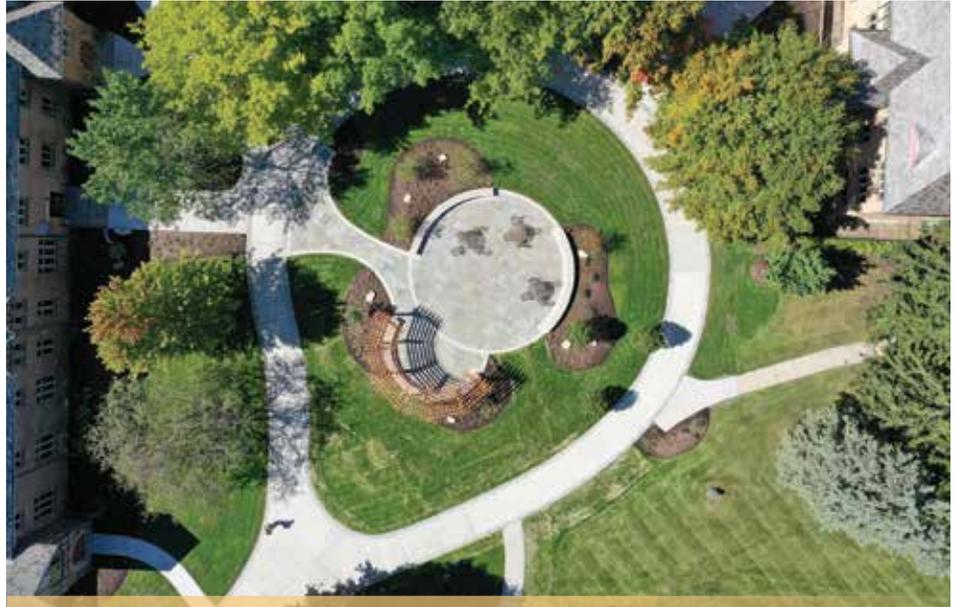
PLANNING FOR BLESSINGS

I am a planner. In fact, few things in life give me more joy than making lists and checking off boxes in the FranklinCovey planner I have been using for years. So when President Treptow asked me, the newest professor on campus, to serve as the chairman of a new strategic planning committee, I couldn't wait to get started.

Joining President Treptow and me on the committee are two other professors, Sam Degner and Rich Gurgel. Despite the group's small size, we hit the ground running last fall and made significant progress over the past few months. Here are some highlights...

In November the committee sent an online survey to everyone in the seminary family: professors, staff members, students, and spouses. The questions focused on the campus buildings and grounds: "What do you appreciate? What areas could be improved?" The survey also encouraged people to dream a bit, to think about what new or expanded facilities could help us carry out our mission.

Over one hundred people completed the survey and shared hundreds of ideas and suggestions—a great response to begin the planning process. The committee then sifted through the data and identified a number of overarching themes. The most common response was thanksgiving, a desire to express



The strategic planning committee is studying how the seminary can best use its grounds.

gratitude for our beautiful campus and the dedicated men and women who maintain it. There was a clear recognition that we are richly blessed.

The surveys also surfaced a number of issues that warrant further discussion. Do we have sufficient classroom space to meet our future needs, especially as we anticipate the blessing of larger classes coming from Martin Luther College? Could the lower level of the library be reconfigured and repurposed to make better use of that space? The auditorium/fitness center is thirty-five years old. Is it time to update, maybe even expand? With the majority of

students now married during their seminary years, should we look into the possibility of building married student housing on campus?

Those are good questions and as sub-committees are being formed to address them, the strategic planning committee is keeping its eye on the big picture. Our goal is to

present a strategic plan to the seminary's governing board when it meets on campus in September. The timeline is ambitious, but achievable, and the most recently completed step was to engage with the people you probably think of first when you think of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, the students and professors.

The committee received valuable input from seminary professors. Listening sessions were held to involve the entire student body. Committee members also consulted with WELS leaders and shared their findings with the governing board.

What will our committee be doing six months from now, and what will come of all this planning? Only the Lord knows. He knows the future, and he knows and always does what is best for his children. As we strive to be good stewards of the gifts he has entrusted to us, we are confident that God will be with us and bless us and equip us with everything we need to carry out his work. Because all of those boxes in my planner have already been checked. †

Professor Steven Pagels teaches systematic theology and Christian education.



Strategic planning also includes studying how the classroom space can best serve today's students.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

If someone would have told me just a few years ago that I would be a student at Concordia Lutheran Seminary in St. Louis (CSL) right now, I might have burst into gales of disbelieving laughter. Although, I do suppose that I might have laughed even harder had you also suggested that I would be a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS). Yet, here I am. I am one of the “new guys” at WLS after being called to teach church history and homiletics in 2017. When I received the call, I had been considering how I might continue studying topics in Christian church history that had been introduced to me through WLS Summer Quarter and online learning programs. After I came here, I was invited to continue my pursuit of a “terminal” degree that could be used in service to my new calling at WLS. After doing some research, I applied to CSL’s History of Exegesis Ph.D. program and began my studies in the fall of 2018, even as I was starting to teach my first classes at WLS.

I suppose my anecdote raises the simple question, “Why?” Why would a new teacher at WLS be interested in pursuing a terminal degree? Why wouldn’t the resources that he has at WLS (including the class notes from previous professors who have taught his courses) be enough to support his ministry at WLS? Those are good questions, and I will answer them from my perspective.

First of all, a shepherd in God’s church will always be a servant who loves to learn. No one, at least anyone who plans on having a ministry of any length, goes into a new call thinking he already knows everything that will ever be necessary to carry out that new calling. Instead, every overseer comes into his new position with humility and respect for his Lord, his office, the people he has been called to serve, and the community in which they live. The willingness and humility to learn is an important aspect of his serving as a full-time worker in God’s Kingdom. He is always digging into Scripture; he is always learning how to serve his people better; he is always looking to learn the culture of his congregation and neighborhood so that he might serve them better. The examples could go on and on. The point is, when a teacher ceases also to be a student, he is not very far from not being a teacher any longer.



Professor Bill Tackmier received his Ph.D. in Old Testament in 2020.



Professor Joel Otto received a Masters of Theology in Church History in 2019.

I suppose this might answer the question of why one must continue to learn even as he teaches at WLS, but why would he need to pursue a terminal degree in the wider academic world? For me, whatever degree might be at the end of this road of education is not the point; the learning along the way is! The simplest way to put it is, “I don’t know what I don’t know.” In other words, in the years that I have been privileged to be a student at WLS’ Summer Quarter and at CSL, I have enjoyed deeply knowledgeable teachers who are part of the academic conversation, who have spent extensive time researching the intricacies of that topic, and who, as

a result, are able to give me a “guided tour” when I sit at their feet. Through such guidance, I am currently in the process of appreciating why, for example, the fracture in ecclesiastical unity that took place on Sunday, July 16, 1054 A.D. first sees its cracks developing around the year 431 A.D. or why men with names like Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril of Alexandria, and Fulgentius of Ruspe are important names worth remembering.

For me the quest is not just for facts, but also because history is the soil in which the Christian and Lutheran confessions grew. One may grasp either Christian history or systematics without the other, but to see their

MAKES TEACHERS BETTER

intertwining relationship is to understand each better. As one does that, he is able to appreciate with deepening awe and wonder the mercy and never-failing love of God as he preserves his truth, his gospel, from one generation to the next. Then, with what I have learned and with God's never-changing Word as the font of truth, I have the privilege of working with the next generation of WELS pastors and comparing the truths in God's Word to the decisions and doctrines that humans have explicated in God's name, to see them in their historical context, to see their outcomes, to learn the good and avoid the bad.

My examples so far have been about what I work with in church history. Think of all there is to grasp, dig into, and learn for the sake of becoming clearer proclaimers of the gospel message that is brought out through deeper studies in other disciplines! Targeted and ongoing study in programs that end in terminal degrees encourages deeper learning of God's Word, of the communities that were entrusted with that Word, and the methods that God used to preserve and transmit his inerrant Word. Seminary professor Paul Wendland put it like this:

While the truth doesn't change, recent scholarship has broadened and deepened our understanding of the ancient societies in which the prophets spoke, in which the Word became flesh, and in which the Word of the Lord grew. We would be dismissing the wise provision of our God if we would ignore these studies.

Such studies also have contemporary application. They encourage learning about the world in which we live, its varied cultures, its methods of communication, and its biblical scholarship, both positive and negative. By pursuing terminal degrees, WLS professors enter into a dialogue with the scholarly community on the particular topic they are studying. In that dialogue, we will engage with those who have presuppositions or reach conclusions with which we disagree, and having that conversation allows us to understand the different viewpoints that are held in the world around us. Professor Ken Cherney wrote this to me:

A lot has been learned (recently) about the text of Scripture, or the biblical languages, or the world in which the Bible was born, and not all of it is rationalistic and useless. Our students, and their future congregations, are better served when we're in touch—and can put them in touch—with



Professor Stephen Geiger has a Ph.D. in Classical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies.

advancements that will help them understand their Bibles better. What's more, in the wider world of scholarship, we might even have a contribution to make. To engage the academy on subjects we care about seems more likely to be productive, and certainly more loving, than to hide behind our confessional bunkers and lob grenades at them.

And so, trusting the effective and life-giving Word and the fellowship that the Lord has given me both at WLS and in WELS, I continue to wear my two "hats"—one as a professor at WLS and the other as a student at CSL. I do so with the goal of using the talents and opportunities that the Lord has given to me to be the very best servant of his Word for the students and the synod that he has called me to serve. May it be done for his glory so that as many as possible might be saved. †

Professor Robert Wendland teaches church history and homiletics.

EVIDENT BLESSINGS FROM

Our risen and ascended Savior continues to see to the needs of his people around the world, including their need for faithful shepherds. The Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) Team sees these blessings every day as it coordinates the theological training of non-traditional students in North America and partners with sister churches around the world.

This year's graduation and call day service at the seminary was held virtually on Ascension Day. The graduating class included two PSI students, Qiang Wang and Simon Duoth. For most of the 2019-2020 academic year, we were also blessed to have Michael Simarmata on our campus.



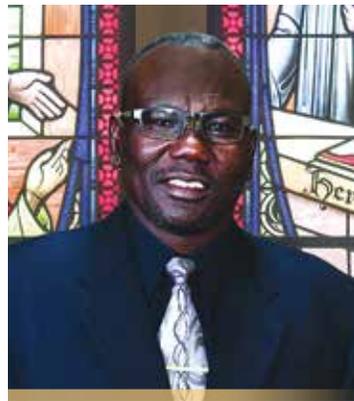
QIANG WANG

Qiang (pronounced “Chung”) had been Buddhist all his life. After a successful career as a businessman in China, Qiang and his wife Susan immigrated to Vancouver in 2013. They were looking for a change of pace, more family time, and an education for their son. God had much more in mind; he kept sending Qiang believers who were pointing him to Christ. Qiang began reading the Bible more closely in order to find fault with the Christian faith and give an answer to the “crazy people.” As he read, the Word of God changed him. The Holy Spirit opened his eyes to see the glory of the Son of God.

After being baptized in another Christian church, Qiang later met Rev. Geoff Cortright from Saviour of the Nations in Vancouver. They studied the Bible together, and Qiang was received as a member by adult confirmation. In 2016, Qiang began serving as an evangelist in the church

and enrolled in the PSI program. In December of 2019, Qiang graduated from the program. The following month he was ordained and commissioned as an exploratory pastor at Abiding Love in Coquitlam, a suburb of Vancouver.

The man who once thought that the gospel was foolish now preaches that foolishness with confidence and joy. We pray that God will lead many more to righteousness through Rev. Qiang and his wife, Susan.



SIMON DUOTH

Simon was born into the Nuer tribe in what is now called South Sudan. He became a refugee when Muslims from the northern part of Sudan initiated civil war by attacking the Christians and traditional animists in the southern part. As a

refugee in 1983, Simon first lived in Ethiopia, near Gambella. That same year he married Nyalual Tuoch. Ten years later they and their children moved to a refugee camp in Kenya. In 1994, they came to the U.S.

Simon received some theological training in Africa and has always thought of himself as a Lutheran leader. In 2012, through the encouragement of Rev. Peter Bur and Rev. Mark Schewe, Simon joined Holy Trinity, Des Moines, Wash. Simon is currently serving under the Pacific Northwest District Mission Board, as he shepherds Nuer people in Des Moines, Renton, and other parts of the district, including Canada.

Prof. Sorum remarks, “Simon’s character has been refined in a crucible of testing. In my years of knowing him, traveling to many places with him, serving with him, and teaching him, I have always seen him as a calm, humble, loyal, faithful, and mission-minded man. He has a Lutheran heart. Simon is a wonderful team player. His humility and desire to get the job done make him a great travel and mission partner. I find him to be courageous and relentless. Like Rev. Peter Bur, Simon has a strong desire to get the true gospel to all of the Nuer refugees who are scattered around the world.”

Simon completed his PSI training in May 2020, was ordained as a pastor in June, and will continue to serve under his district mission board.

OUR ASCENDED SAVIOR



MICHAEL SIMARMATA

Michael, from Sumatra, completed his seminary training and a year of internship in Gereja Lutheran Indonesia (GLI). To build on that training and to strengthen the relationship between our churches, it was decided that Michael would take a year of classes at the seminary. Michael arrived in August 2019. It took a while for him to adjust to the cooler temperatures and to constant English, but his big smile and positive attitude were obvious from the start. Because of coronavirus he had to return to Indonesia sooner than expected, but his time here provided mutual blessings.

Michael's classmate Christian Willick comments, "Michael's English improved dramatically. He increased his knowledge of Greek and church history, and he experienced a new part of the country when he helped with mission work in Dallas over winter break. But it

would also be fair to say that I learned a lot from Michael. He taught me bits of Indonesian culture and his native language Bahasa. His example of positive persistence to thrive in a new setting motivated me for my first year at seminary, and he also opened my eyes to the severe persecutions against Christians in his country. It was a new and humbling perspective, and it has prompted my prayers for fellow Christians in that part of the world."

Another classmate John Jordan, who comes from South Asia, remarks: "One time we were talking about how our Asian cultures can be superstitious, and I was telling Michael that many churches in my home country preach about miracles all the time. That was when Michael asked me to think about the biggest miracle in my life. I was not sure how to answer, so I told him I have not really seen any miracles. Then he reminded me that Jesus Christ died for me on the cross and that the Holy Spirit has opened my eyes to see him as my Savior. Michael encouraged me to focus on these miracles. His simple words were very profound and will always stick with me."

Finally, classmate Joel Hopper says, "Michael said that the most influential experience of his time at the seminary was the Christian fellowship. He was grateful to witness and be part of the special Christian brotherhood we share. He saw the whole seminary family working together as one in Christ, helping each other, laboring towards the same goal of proclaiming Christ to the world; students working with students, with professors, with staff. He regularly reminded us how privileged we are to have such gifted and faithful Christian mentors, how blessed we are to have free and easy access to every resource necessary in our study of God's Word. We take so many of God's blessings for granted, and he regularly helped to open my eyes to these blessings. Michael is such a joyful, energetic, and funny guy. We shared many laughs, meals, and late nights. We prayed, we praised, and we studied. God built a friendship in Christ that now spans the globe. I am eager to see how God will use Michael to bring just as many blessings to Indonesia as he did to us in America. Praise be to Christ for this glorious partnership we share in the gospel."

We give thanks for Qiang, Simon, and Michael, and we pray for the Lord's continued blessings on their lives and ministries. †

Professor Bradley Wordell teaches Old Testament and serves on the Pastoral Studies Institute Team with Professor E. Allen Sorum and Reverend Jonathan Bare.



Juniors Joel Hopper (right) and Christian Willick (left) were inducted into the WLS-MLC chapter of Eta Beta Rho, an honor society that recognizes excellence in Hebrew. They are shown with Professor Kenneth Cherney and student Evan Arrowsmith, the first-ever WLS inductee.



One of the highlights of each school day is the opportunity to worship in chapel.



Each year at Mission & Ministry, seminary students hear from WELS administrators in home and world missions and learn what synodical resources are available to support their future ministries.



Prof. Earle Treptow was installed as the thirteenth president of the seminary. Rev. Steven Pagels was installed as a professor of dogmatics and homiletics. They are pictured with their wives Jeanne and Shannon.



Asian ministry partners gather to plan for their work and outreach.



Jacob Limpert has been assigned to St. Paul, Wonewoc, Wisconsin.



Part of a student's education includes learning how to lead worship.



Eighteen participants working on five continents attended a Dialogue Education Conference hosted by the Pastoral Studies Institute.



At Friends of the Seminary Day in early October, participants learned more about the seminary's mission.

ONLY GOD KNOWS

I've always been a planner. Right now I could tell you when I think my husband and I will own our first house, how much we will have in investments by the time we retire, how many kids we will have. You get the picture. It has become increasingly obvious to me over the last few years, however, that planning done with the wrong mindset just shines a spotlight on how little control people have over their lives.

Let me illustrate. Exactly one week before this article was due, I went into labor with our first child, only to arrive home from the hospital with a baby girl and three days to the deadline. I had to learn how to feed her at all hours of the night and day without a fleet of nurses at my disposal, while at the same time trying to recall that skill I had in high school of writing essays mere hours before the teacher wanted them. (I said I'm a planner, not that I don't procrastinate.) We read in Scripture of God's perfect vision for our futures and how he has a plan for our lives. Only by looking back on the last few years can I start to see the clear vision with which he has guided my blind steps.



Maddie and Sam Helwig welcomed their first child in 2020.

My husband and I decided we would go abroad after college and before he went to seminary. That was what we agreed to, at least. Honestly though, I secretly hoped we would arrive overseas and decide to spread God's good news there indefinitely. We made amazing friends there, some of whom I still keep up with. We grew in our

faith and planted seeds, some of which we still see the Holy Spirit tending and growing. We also got chances to travel and see the other side of the God's created world. I wouldn't trade that year in Asia for anything.

But God had his perfect vision set on other sights for us. We left after one year so that my husband could start at the seminary. The day we got back to the U.S. I found out I was pregnant, and I admit that I breathed a huge sigh of relief that I was back in my home country where I had the support of my family for this next stage of our lives. All of a sudden those idyllic thoughts of travelling and experiencing the world indefinitely seemed crazy. But God still had his perfect vision set for our lives. That year overseas prepared us for the work we did at the international students' dormitory for Wisconsin Lutheran High School. Now instead of us being in one foreign country, people from many countries came to us and lived as students under our care. It was as fulfilling an experience as we could have hoped for during this time in our lives. God blesses us, and others through us, in ways that only he fully knows.

God is always in control. We read this in Scripture and know it in our heads. But do we always feel this in our hearts? I hope that reading this gives you encouragement, especially other seminary wives who may be struggling with a seeming lack of control over their future. Only God knows the endless possibilities for our lives, and we can rest assured that he will pick the perfect plan to guide our steps as we walk through uncertain times. †

Maddie Helwig, an MLC graduate, is married to Sam, who recently completed his junior year.



Maddie and Sam spent a year teaching English in Southeast Asia.

FROM LAW TO GOSPEL

As a young man, I never seriously considered studying for the pastoral ministry. Even well into my forties, as a middle-aged man who loved the Scriptures and who enjoyed teaching Sunday School and reading some Lutheran theology on my own time, I had no such intentions.

Thankfully God sees what we do not, prepares us in spite of ourselves, and provides opportunities for service that would never have occurred to us! It was less than five years ago, as we began to hear more about the number of pastoral vacancies in our churches, that I began to consider and to discuss with my family whether I might be able to serve our Lord as a pastor.

For twenty years, I was blessed to serve my community—Scotland County, in rural northeast Missouri—as a judge. I worked alongside outstanding people who care deeply about their work and those they serve. I had an unusual window into the nearly infinite variety of ways that the devil and our sinful flesh lead people astray, and into the nearly infinite variety of misfortunes and disasters that befall people for reasons we simply do not understand. I also learned much about self-discipline, confidentiality, and attention to detail when working on matters of immense importance to others. Legal work inevitably forces one to pay close attention to subtle nuances and shades of meaning, in the spoken and written word.

The time I spent in public service taught me much about its importance, but also about its limits. Laws and regulations do not build, do not create, do not save. The temporal law, even at its best, can do no more than to help maintain reasonably safe and peaceful places for people to live and work. Because the laws of this world are written, enforced, and applied by sinners, they will never be a perfect



Karl DeMarce, Scotland County Circuit Courtroom, Memphis, Missouri
representation of God's will for our lives — and sometimes they work in ways directly opposite to God's will.

Only the gospel of Jesus Christ saves. My prayer is that God, who has graciously brought me to saving faith and preserved me in the faith, would allow me to use my remaining productive life and health as a thank offering, sharing his saving gospel with others.

And God, in his grace, provided everything that made this path possible! Faithful and loving Christian parents, Jim and Virginia DeMarce. Baptism at my grandmother's church, St. Matthew, Spring Valley, Wis. Lutheran elementary school at Grace, Falls Church, Va. My wife Brenda, and our five children, now ages 28 to 18, who all have supported me enthusiastically, in every way, despite the real sacrifices and disruptions involved in giving up a career and going back to school.

Brenda and I give thanks for our home church, Grace in Oskaloosa, Iowa. Pastor Roger Neumann patiently mentored me through the three years of Pastoral Studies Institute course work in preparation for the seminary, while providing a wonderful example of what faithful and humble service as a pastor looks like. Our brothers and sisters in Christ continually encouraged me in my studies while supporting us with their prayers and gifts.

It is no small thing to leave a career and uproot a settled family. Studying and completing assignments come harder—and wear me out faster—than they did thirty years ago. But it is an incomparable joy to spend days and nights in the Word of God. I am encouraged by the example of my classmates who much earlier in life were blessed with the desire to pursue this work. And I have no doubt that God will continue to bless his church, in ways we cannot even begin to imagine. †

Karl DeMarce started classes at the seminary in the fall of 2019.



Karl DeMarce spent 20 years serving as a judge before becoming a second career student at the seminary.

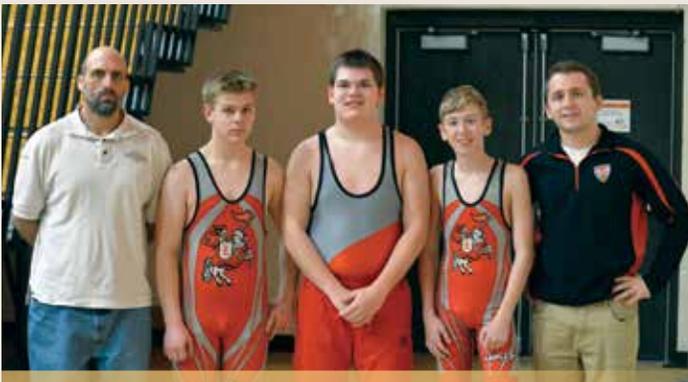
“NOT WHAT I ENVISIONED”



“How’s teaching going?” many people ask me. I say something simple, like, “It’s going great, I’m learning a bunch,” then hurry on to the next topic. The fuller answer I could give is a bit more personal.

It’s tough. Twenty years of Christian education and great teachers certainly equipped me well. However, as I stand in front of my class, I realize just how challenging teaching actually is. There is still so much to learn, and I can’t do it alone.

What is so challenging? Those two students who just won’t stop talking. That teenager who seems to detest God’s Word and who bangs his head on the desk whenever I talk about Jesus. The intelligent girl who is a little frustrated because my teaching isn’t the clearest and my expectations aren’t precise. Figuring out how to teach. Figuring out how to balance checking late work, preparing tests, grading, emailing parents, and making lesson plans. Figuring out how to encourage students to discuss God’s Word and apply it in their lives.



Orie Thomford helped start a club wrestling team at Manitowoc Lutheran.

How’s teaching going? Not what I envisioned . . . but that’s where God’s grace shines through.

If I had the option to go back in time and reconsider the decision to teach for one year at Manitowoc Lutheran High School, I wouldn’t hesitate. I’d accept again. Because of God’s grace and what that grace has done for me and through me.

What God envisioned came to pass. And, indeed, he has taught me so much:

1. Keep learning. Never have the attitude, “I’m good enough.”
2. Ask others for advice!
3. God still richly showers blessings on clanging cymbals.
4. Passion and love for your subject go a long way.



Orie was installed as an emergency instructor at Manitowoc Lutheran High School.

On top of all that, there have been several small improvements and realizations along the way so that I am a better teacher now than when I started.

What God envisioned came to pass, and he has done so much through me. But realize this: I don’t have any heartstring-tugging success stories. I can’t point to some students and claim to have had a life-altering impact on them. And that’s okay. That might be humanly measured success anyway. So what did God work through me? Ninety-some students heard about the love of God expressed in his Word and in history—all year, every day. The Holy Spirit worked on their hearts through his Word. I was just another piece of God’s plan to reach out to these students with his grace.

How angry Satan must be! He has spent so much time and effort trying to mold our students’ culture and lives with the intent of dragging them along a path that leads to hell, and God brings onto the scene a clanging cymbal like me to bring the only thing that can truly drive Satan away and cut up his plans: the living, breathing, eternal Word of God. I honestly can’t tell you a better use of my time than that, and there’s no way I would have spent it any other way.

And now, I have a whole year of experience teaching high schoolers. I have learned that their culture is often focused on “self” and that the enemy is seeking to tear our young adults away from God. This teaching experience has been a priceless learning experience. It will help me also in the future to reach other high schoolers in whatever life and ministry opportunities the Lord graciously provides.

How’s teaching going? Not what I envisioned. And I thank God for that. What he envisioned was so much better. †

Orie Thomford served in an emergency call for the 2019–2020 school year.

NO PASTOR IS AN ISLAND

It's easy for a pastor to become an island. It could be the many hours that he spends doing ministry that nobody else really sees and recognizes, or the congregational programs or initiatives that he knows are important but nobody else is interested in. It could be the messy counseling case that leaves him doubting every single word he shared and didn't share. It could be the particular strengths for ministry that God has placed in him that nobody else seems to care about or the pet sin that people would never suspect of their pastor, yet he is all too aware. It could be the nagging idea in his mind that he is just not cut out to keep serving as a pastor. Or maybe it's the weight of knowing that he is doing the work of Jesus, so all his mistakes and failures feel a million pounds heavier than they might in some other vocation.

How easy it is for a pastor to let these issues turn him into an island! Alone. Isolated. Misunderstood. Unsung. Bitter. Mediocre. Ineffective. Adrift.

There is a lie that Satan likes to breathe into the atmosphere of pastors: "These big issues that threaten to make you an island have been experienced only by you." Here's the truth: It just may be that every pastor has experienced every one of these issues, even that pastor in the conference or circuit who seems to have it all figured out. In fact, right now, he may be struggling with one or more of these things. How is he getting through all of that and still proclaiming God's good news to souls that need it? It's just like what Jesus said to the apostle: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). That pastor is persevering because God's grace is immensely more powerful than any issue he will face. That pastor is letting God's grace



Garrett Alford spent three years as a mentee, learning from a nearby experienced pastor.



Garrett Alford blesses a newly-married couple.

bring all the power to persevere. That pastor is accepting God's help and holding out that same help—God's grace—to others.

For the first three years of my ministry, the Pastor Partners program of the seminary provided Stephen for me, a fellow pastor to serve as my mentor. Yet it's difficult for me to use a title as technical-sounding as "mentor" to describe what Stephen did for me.

Stephen was (and still is!) a friend, a confidante, and a source of encouragement. He was (and still is!) a reminder that my weaknesses are not unique, my struggles not exclusively mine, my failures not unparalleled, and my—even my—sins not somehow left off the cross of Jesus.

If you are going into the pastoral ministry or just thinking about that path for your life, make it your vision never to be an island. Avoid thinking you're so strong that you can do this on your own. Be a recipient of all the many gifts of grace that God has made available to you. Build a bridge with someone like Stephen, so that you can escape the lie and be refreshed by the truth.

And let all God's people continue to pray for and support the spiritual leaders the risen Savior has provided for them. †

Garrett Alford serves as pastor at Christ, Eden Prairie, Minnesota.

UNFORESEEN BLESSINGS

Prof. Richard Gurgel has taught at the seminary since 1999 and has served as the director of Grow in Grace since 2010. In October 2019, he accepted the call to serve as the president of Martin Luther College. He and his wife, Sue, moved to New Ulm in the summer of 2020. In March, I had the opportunity to interview Prof. Gurgel about his ministry here. Through his ministry God has blessed our church body in many ways, with unforeseen blessings also through Grow in Grace.



Prof. Rich and Sue Gurgel are moving to New Ulm where he will serve as president of Martin Luther College.

WHAT DID YOU TEACH DURING YOUR YEARS (1999-2020) AS A SEMINARY PROFESSOR?

It's fascinating that nothing written in my call twenty-one years ago matches what I do now. The call says "systematics (doctrine), education, and other areas." It's ironic that as I finish I only teach in homiletics (preaching), an area not specifically mentioned. Over the years I taught education, all four semesters of dogmatics, and all levels of homiletics.

HOW AND WHEN DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE CONTINUING EDUCATION OF OUR PASTORS?

Two years before Prof. Mark Zarling left to be MLC president, I was added to our seminary's continuing education committee. When he left in 2007, I became the chairman. The committee met only two times a year, mostly to plan and carry out Summer Quarter on campus. At that point, the dream of what Grow in Grace could be had not entered my brain or the imagination of anyone on campus.

HOW DID GROW IN GRACE BEGIN?

The impetus came from two directions: first, from a WELS ad hoc committee that wanted to help all called workers to pursue excellence, and secondly from a growing understanding on our campus that we needed to help our pastors thrive longer in the public ministry. Our theological journal *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* had been serving our pastors for 100 years, and Summer Quarter had been serving some of our pastors since 1974, but the number of pastoral resignations was somewhat staggering. Soon it became clear that continuing education needed to be seen more broadly and that we needed to address more than just the academic needs of our pastors. Is their devotional life healthy? Are they balancing their callings as husband, father, pastor, and friend? Are they connected to their brothers in ministry, or are they isolated?

HOW HAS GROW IN GRACE CHANGED OVER THE YEARS?

Grow in Grace went from being "the institute for continuing education" to "the institute for pastoral growth." We began to think more holistically, and the four areas of our work developed (see sidebar).

LOOKING BACK ON TEN YEARS OF GROW IN GRACE, WHAT WERE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU FACED?

At the beginning of my work at Grow in Grace, I was asked to devote half of my time to the development of a comprehensive program that would benefit the pastors of our church body, but I didn't know what that was going to be. And I didn't know how we were going to fund it. We had a generous grant from the Zietlow Foundation that covered half of my salary for three years. That enabled us to get a running start, but we also had a hunch that we would need to become somewhat self-supporting. Also, we faced the challenge of needing to change mindsets. Aren't our pastors well trained over many years? Why and how do they need to keep growing? Why do new pastors need mentors? The questions made us sharpen our focus and communicate the needs. It has been fun to watch God bless our program and the pastors we serve.

FOR WHAT BLESSINGS ARE YOU MOST THANKFUL?

One of our core values is that we build partnerships. The four areas of work we are doing—none of these ideas were mine. They were the ideas of many godly men and women, inside and outside of WELS. On campus we look like a small shop, but we have more than 150 people who are partners with us on our Grow in Grace team. Secondly, I would mention the significant drop in pastoral resignations from the 1990s to the 2010s. How much is due to the efforts of Grow in Grace, God only knows, but the statistical reduction in resignations means that we have 100 more pastors in our pulpits. I am thankful for that.

WHAT NEW OPPORTUNITIES DO YOU SEE ON THE HORIZON FOR GROW IN GRACE?

We are in a digital age, and younger pastors especially are looking for resources in the form of brief videos, podcasts, and webinars. Grow in Grace will be able to maximize these opportunities. Secondly, as God grows our Confes-

THROUGH GROW IN GRACE

sional Evangelical Lutheran Conference around the world, they will need an institute for pastoral growth. Think of the opportunities in Africa, in Vietnam and other places in Asia, and in Latin America. We built our programs to serve pastors in this country, but to think about the possibilities for helping pastors around the world is exciting.

WHAT FINAL WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT DO YOU HAVE FOR THE PASTORS OF WELS AND THE PEOPLE THEY SERVE?

Pastors, remember that your first calling is as a child of God. That calling began at your baptism and it continues into eternity. Your own heart needs to be cut and healed by the power of the Word day after day. If we are not growing, if we are not being comforted by the gospel, it is almost impossible to have a gospel heart and a gospel-predominant ministry. We will pick up and lay down our calling as pastors, but our calling as a child of God is

THE FOUR AREAS OF GROW IN GRACE

- **Courses and Presentations:** Summer Quarter and Winterim classes on campus, online courses, satellite Summer Quarter and Pastors' Institutes in the districts of WELS.
- **Pastor Partners:** The 3-year mentor program for newly assigned graduates, as well as ministry retreats every year in San Antonio for pastors 3, 10, 25, and 35 years after their graduation.
- **Informal Resources:** A monthly electronic mailing called *Four Branches*, book reviews and other online resources.
- **Study Packages:** These toolkits help pastors to evaluate and grow in their devotional life and to understand their gifts. The resources also help pastors to grow in all their callings by partnering with spiritually mature lay leaders.

preeminent. Members of WELS, advocate for your pastors to have time for all their callings in life. Don't keep them so busy that they cannot grow. Know that they need to grow, just as you need to grow.

WHAT WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT DO YOU HAVE FOR PROF. TOM KOCK, THE NEW DIRECTOR OF GROW IN GRACE?

Be what God has equipped and wired you to be. We all come with our own set of weaknesses and strengths, but God is with you. It will be fun to watch what God accomplishes through Grow in Grace under your leadership.

We thank Prof. Gurgel for all his faithful efforts and we wish him every blessing in his new calling as president of our WELS college of ministry. †

Professor Bradley Wordell teaches Old Testament and is part of the Pastoral Studies Institute Team.

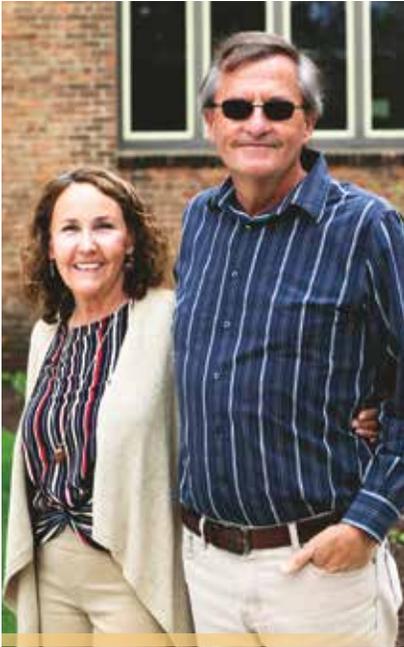


The Gurgel family has grown up on the seminary's campus.

LONGTIME SEMINARY

CURTIS WENTHUR AND LINDA WENTHUR

Director of Buildings and Grounds & Campus Grounds Team



Curtis and Linda Wenthur have been mainstays on the seminary campus. Curtis joined the staff in June 1986 as the campus grounds supervisor and a few years later became the director of buildings and grounds.

For the next 34 years he was involved in various campus updates, including a five-year renovation of all the dormitory sections and the

award-winning chapel renovation. He supervised as the seminary moved from wells to city water, built furlough homes, repaired the roadway system, and added miles of cable to accommodate technology. The most recent project was the inner court renovation that gives students a space to gather. It was all done for one reason: “We were always striving to make the seminary a better, safer place to live and study for our future pastors,” he says.

Linda joined the team in April of 1996 and spent her 24 years designing, installing, and maintaining landscapes on campus. She was also in charge of seasonal and special event decorating and helped with interior updates in the buildings and homes.

In their tasks, they worked with generations of student employees. “I am hiring students who are children of the students I hired when I first started. There are also a number of professors now teaching here that were students when I started,” he says.

Linda has noticed a consistency through all of them. “They come with many different skill sets, but they all have had willing hearts and good attitudes,” she says.

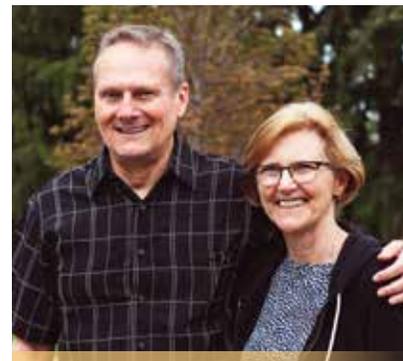
While looking forward to retirement, they will miss the seminary family. “I have loved working here for the simple reason that every person connected to the seminary cares about you, your welfare, your family, your life in general,” Curtis says.

Linda adds, “I have loved being part of the mission. This wasn’t work, it was being allowed to be a small part of preparing men to spread the gospel.”

PROFESSOR JOHN HARTWIG

Library Director • Faculty Secretary • Homiletics Professor

When we came to campus in 1995, we were fresh off twelve years of living abroad in Malawi and Thailand,” says Professor John Hartwig. This led to some awkward transitions both for his family and for him. “I remember coming onto campus as a new prof and seeing the many talents of my new colleagues. I was afraid I would not be up to the task God had placed before me,” he says, “but through it all, we had the assurance that this was God’s will for us. On top of that, our new friends and neighbors welcomed us with more-than-open arms.”



In the past 25 years, he’s seen many changes, “yet they happened so incrementally they didn’t feel like big changes. It’s only looking back that you realize how big they are,” he says.

In his role as the library services director, he’s noticed the switch “from a card catalog to the online catalog we have today with access to articles and essays online.” In addition, “the physical space itself has been updated to provide a friendlier, more collaborative space for the way students work today,” he says.

He highlights the positive changes he sees in the student body—especially from his own days as a student. “Today’s student body is a kinder, gentler student body, eager to reach out to the community and to serve the church at large. They organize blood drives and the Seminary Scurry to attract others to our campus. Many work in various ministries throughout the metro area,” he explains. He also appreciates the stronger connection to students. “They are eager to get to know their professors. They invite us to social gatherings. They are much more open with the profs than I ever was with my professors—and that is a good thing,” he says.

Another positive change, he explains, “is the seminary’s global outlook, one it did not have to such a degree 25 years ago.” He highlights “the three members of the PSI

FAMILY MEMBERS RETIRE

team who are continually on the move, the brothers from all over the world who visit our campus, and the professors who travel to teach in training programs and seminaries worldwide.” In addition, he talks about the blessing of the library’s world mission collection that has materials in over 100 languages and the opportunities for students to participate in urban and Hispanic outreach locally and evangelism nationally.

As for what lies ahead, he and his wife had planned to retire to Madison, Wis., but God had other plans. Professor Hartwig and his wife Helen will be moving to Germany where he has accepted a call to serve as a civilian chaplain in Europe.

Though they look forward to this new adventure, they will miss the seminary family and beautiful grounds. As they look ahead to worshipping with small groups in non-churchlike settings for the next years, he knows they will miss the special worship services on campus. “In fact, that’s probably my favorite memory. To experience a festival worship service or graduation or call day service—to lift our voices as one—is truly a foretaste of the heavenly banquet that awaits us all,” he says.

PROFESSOR JAMES TIEFEL

Dean of Chapel • Seminary Chorus Director • Worship and Homiletics Professor • Director of Student Field Services



Professor James Tiefel is currently the longest-serving seminary professor, having joined the seminary family in 1985. In those 35 years, his impact on the seminary has been immeasurable. In addition to revamping the worship courses, he added to worship experiences by introducing festival services, evening Vesper and Compline services,

and worship with Holy Communion. He composed special services for all campus events and introduced contemporary accompaniments. His impact on worship extends throughout WELS, as he was a member of the Commission on Worship for 26 years and served on two synodical hymnal committees.

He also chaired the committee responsible for renovating the seminary’s chapel. Annually more than 50 percent of the student body participated in the Seminary Chorus. As the director of student field services, he devised the Early Field Training experience, the Student Summer Assistant Program, and the Senior Assistant Program.

The campus had an impact on him and his wife Brenda. “Since we arrived on campus when we were quite young, we raised our family here. So the time here is really the history of our family,” Professor Tiefel says. “This campus is a perfect place to raise a family. Of course, it is an uncommonly beautiful place to live.”

As he reflects on his ministry to the seminary, he notes some of the changes. “Dress has become far more casual,” he says. “No one imagined a ‘casual day’ in 1985, and professors’ wives would not have dreamed of coming to campus social events in jeans. In fact, in the early years, professors’ wives met on a set day each month at 7:30 p.m. Everything was very formal: dresses, coffee and tea, desserts served on china around a dining room table.”

While students throughout the years have some similar traits, he notes that “students today may be more interested in their families than 35 years ago; student excuses for taking children to doctors’ appointments were rare in the early years. Students today rely more on internet resources and less on books, which I think is a disadvantage.” The memories of the students are plentiful and one stands out. “I regularly say in class, ‘The day will come when you will know the lectionary as well as your name. You could call me in the middle of the night and ask me to name the Second Reading for the Fourth Sunday in Lent, and I could tell you.’ Sure enough. The phone rang at 1:30 a.m. (the student knew my wife was out of town) and he asked, ‘So Professor, what is the Second Reading for the Fourth Sunday in Lent?’ Of course, I didn’t know. But I could have said anything, because he didn’t know, either.”

As he enters the next stage of life, he will continue to serve and support local congregations as a semi-retired pastor. †

Linda Buxa serves as the seminary’s communications coordinator.

THE GREAT GIVER MOVES US TO GIVE TO HIS MISSION



As a WELS Christian giving counselor, I have the enjoyable task of connecting with people like you who support various synod ministries including the valuable work of training pastors through Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS). These visits are filled with sacred, precious moments.

Seasoned pastors will tell you that in-home visits are extra special. The pastor comes to give comfort or encouragement from God's Word to a soul that they care for deeply. But in the end, it is the pastor who is encouraged as he sees the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of God's people—people who are carrying out his mission.

I find that true in my visits, too. After some small talk and some sips of coffee, the stories start. I share the wonderful news of what the Lord is doing in various corners of his kingdom. "Your prayers and your gifts are being used by Jesus to make a worldwide impact!" Then, I often receive more than I expected. Moved by hearing what the Lord is doing, God's people share how he has been working in their lives, in the lives of their family members, and in their congregation. God is very busy right now, from what God's people share with me!



Gifts to the seminary are used in many ways. In this case, funds were directed to purchase a new grand piano for the auditorium.



Rev. Kurt Lueneberg, director of WELS Christian Giving, helps Christians excel in the grace of giving.

Sometimes I hear God's people say, "Pastor, I wish I could do more." In these cases, I get to remind them that the one who made the world and owns all things moves our hearts to respond to his blessings simply by our being a blessing to him and his work. Sometimes talking through options helps. A particular arrangement of a gift made during life or after the donor is home in heaven does more than the donor ever expected!

What is the great Giver leading you to do right now? Is the Lord moving you to respond to his generosity in your life with regular, thank-filled offerings? If you're 70 1/2 or older, you might think about making tax-free IRA distributions to support the Lord's work. Or maybe it's time to review your estate plan to see if it reflects your heart's desire to care for your family, your church family, and other causes close to your heart like a WLS scholarship or contribution to WLS operating funds. Such special offerings and planned gifts are wonderful blessings from the Lord for the seminary's present and future service.

The WELS Christian giving counselors that serve your area and the seminary's mission advancement office are ready to have a no-obligation, confidential conversation with you. I'm sure they have some stories to share about what the Lord is doing, and they would love to hear your story—a story that has at its heart the question, "How is the Lord leading your heart to respond to his heart?" †

Pastor Kevin Hundley served the Ministry of Christian Giving from 2016–2020. He accepted a call to serve as pastor at St. John's, rural Lake Mills, Wisconsin.

ONLY GOD'S VISION IS 20/20

As this year's theme suggests, who wouldn't enjoy having 20/20 eyesight or perfect vision to always make the right decisions as we go through life? Unfortunately, we know that as humans we never have perfect vision, so we look to God to guide us, to give us insights in making decisions. We know only God has perfect vision to see what lies ahead. And even though our human vision is far from perfect, we thank God for the guidance he does give us as we go through life. When I think of my own life, I am grateful and blessed for the guidance and opportunities God has given me to see things more clearly from a Christian perspective, even though I know there will always be so much more I do not understand.

In 2018 I was given the unbelievable opportunity to serve as a lay person on the seminary's governing board. This seemed like an overwhelming responsibility and one which I admit I was hesitant to accept. Nonetheless, God led me to accept this opportunity and I am now so grateful for the chance to help lead the seminary. Even though I did not have the vision to see what was

ahead of me, I know God did. Being a layperson, I did not fully appreciate how special the seminary is. I have met many wonderful professors and their families along with many extremely dedicated students. I have sat in classes and have been part of many calls that the board has extended for new professors—three at our last meeting alone, in January.

It often seems surreal to me to be part of this important work, but it is equally clear to me now that God had a clear vision of the many things I may not have understood. His vision is perfect, and we as humans must trust and believe in him. Although I was certainly overwhelmed when I joined the board, I can also see more clearly now that perhaps he placed me on the board because of a long legal and business career in the theatre and hotel business that has allowed me to share some different perspectives with the governing board. Again, God's vision is perfect, and I am extremely grateful that he had this plan for me to serve in this way.



Mr. Thomas Kissinger works as a replay official for NCAA football.

I also think about my hobby working as a replay official for NCAA football. We have a saying in replay that the referees on the field can make mistakes but replay has to be “perfect.” As we all know, no matter how many cameras and no matter how great the technology, seldom does a week go by where fans are not embroiled in discussions about controversial replay calls from the prior weekend. As much as we would like to be perfect, we know that will never happen. I can tell you that, on more than one occasion, in some of the biggest games, I have made a call that I knew was perfect, only to review the tapes the following week and see that the receiver's foot did in fact just nick the pylon. I should have called the pass incomplete instead of allowing the touchdown. These are just a few examples of how human vision, even in replay, is always flawed and reinforces what we already know: only God's vision is perfect. As Christians we must always trust and know that God's vision is the only one that matters. †

Mr. Thomas Kissinger, Sr. Executive Vice President of Marcus Corporation, is a member at Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wis.



Mr. Thomas Kissinger, right, on the balcony of the New York Stock Exchange when Marcus Corporation executives “rang the bell” celebrating its 25th year of being listed on the Exchange and the company's 80th anniversary.



WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

11831 N Seminary Dr Mequon WI 53092

Non-profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Thiensville, WI
Permit No. 8097



(262) 242-8100 wisluthsem.org