

# News Release

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **DR. RICHARD H. BLIESE NAMED LUTHER SEMINARY PRESIDENT-ELECT**

St. Paul, Minn. – The Luther Seminary Board of Directors and Foundation Board of Trustees voted unanimously today to name [Dr. Richard H. Bliese](#) president-elect. He currently serves as the Seminary’s dean of academic affairs and will assume the office of the president on July 1.

“The Search Committee was impressed with Dr. Bliese’s experience and credentials,” said Dr. Susan Jenkins, chair of Luther Seminary’s Board of Directors. “He has served in parish ministry in Germany, Zaire, and the United States. During his time as academic dean at Luther Seminary, Dr. Bliese has shown himself to be an energetic and dedicated worker, committed to Luther Seminary’s mission to prepare leaders for the church. He understands the importance of the connection between Luther Seminary and the ELCA, and that the Seminary’s mission with the ELCA is to serve Christ’s church in the world. We are excited that Dr. Bliese will be able to further the mission, work, and growth of the Seminary.”

He was enthusiastically greeted by the campus community this morning when he was introduced in his new role following daily chapel.

“We were blessed to have many leading Lutheran theological leaders and scholars emerge as candidates,” said Dr. Paul Dovre, chair of the search committee and member of the Seminary’s Board of Directors. “Dr. Bliese best fits the expectations and competencies document that was approved by our Boards. He possesses gifts as a pastoral leader and as an educational, theological, public and administrative leader. He is passionate about the mission of Luther Seminary and will lead with vision, intelligence and understanding.”

Bliese's gifts and expertise fit with the Seminary's calling to serve the church in mission across the street and around the world. He is an experienced pastor, missionary, teacher, administrator and scholar and has particular experience in the areas of church development and redevelopment.

"Dr. Bliese engages audiences and small groups with his clear excitement about and commitment to the mission of the Seminary," said Janet Anderson, chair of Luther Seminary's Foundation Board of Trustees. "I appreciate his zeal for the Seminary's role in mission while holding fast to the Lutheran confessions.

"I look forward to partnering with him to tell the story of this special place to donors, alumni/ae, lay people and the wider church. He understands the importance of the Foundation to the financial health of Luther Seminary. His enthusiasm is contagious."

Bliese was initially attracted to Luther Seminary by its strategic plan which focuses on the church in mission in a world of many cultures and religions. In July 2003 he joined the Seminary faculty as academic dean and associate professor of mission. As academic dean he has worked with the faculty to strengthen key initiatives including biblical preaching and worship; children, youth and family ministry; congregational mission and leadership; and the Center for Lifelong Learning.

"I feel both excited and honored to be at Luther Seminary at this time in its history," said Bliese. "The Seminary is healthy, rich in human resources and postured for growth. The ELCA needs more and better-prepared leaders for an apostolic age of mission in a world of many cultures and religions. This is key to Lutheran congregational renewal in North America. We are ready to move into this promising future."

Prior to joining Luther Seminary, Bliese served as the director of graduate studies and as the Augustana Heritage associate professor of global mission and evangelism at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC). He simultaneously served as a part-time pastor at St. Andrews Lutheran Church in Glenwood, Ill.

A graduate of Wright State University, Bliese earned his master of divinity degree from Christ Seminary-Seminex, St. Louis, Mo., in 1981. His first call as an ordained pastor was to St. Stephanus Lutheran Church in Herne, Germany. After serving four years, he accepted a position with the United Evangelists Missions in Germany as director of the continuing education program for pastors and evangelists in Zaire and Rwanda. From 1986 to 1990, he ministered to a small urban congregation in Bukavu, Zaire and focused on directing continuing education programs at the Centre D'Accueil Protestante Ecumenical Center (C.A.P.), School for

Evangelists in Zaire and Rwanda. He established C.A.P. schools of music, evangelism and language and co-founded a regional development office for research and technical assistance.

After ten years overseas, he returned to the U.S. and earned a master of theology in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century theology (1992) and a Ph.D. in confessional theology (1995) from LSTC.

In addition to his distinguished teaching and pastoral career, Bliese has led mission and evangelism seminars and workshops as an independent consultant, administrated the Hein-Fry Lecture Series, and served as president of the Center for World Christian Interaction. He has published articles throughout the world and co-edited *The Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives* (1997). He is also the co-editor of *The Evangelizing Church: A Lutheran Contribution* (2005).

Bliese is married to Nina Bliese. They have two adult children, Aaron, a literature major at Western Illinois University, and Stephanie, a theater major at Illinois Wesleyan University.

Luther Seminary, the largest of the ELCA's eight seminaries, educates over one-third of the church's clergy and increasing numbers of its lay professionals; leaders of many global Lutheran churches are Luther Seminary graduates. What happens at Luther Seminary touches the lives of thousands of congregations, hundreds of thousands of members and millions around the world.

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Editor's note: A downloadable photo of Dr. Bliese may be found at [www.luthersem.edu/president/photo.asp](http://www.luthersem.edu/president/photo.asp).