STORY

LEGACY THROUGH CHANGE
Luther Seminary educates leaders for Christian communities called and sent by the Holy Spirit to witness to salvation through Jesus Christ and to serve in God’s world.

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Cover photo: A natural gas flare in the Bakken oil field, located in North Dakota

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“Christ is risen!”

This refrain, which we recently repeated again and again as we celebrated the good news of Jesus’ resurrection, has been handed down to us. It is our legacy. We know about this good news that Christ is risen because someone told us. Handing down the story and sharing the good news is a kind of legacy that comes to us as a fresh and new gift.

In this edition of Story, you will read of the many facets that come with the legacy of handing something down. Some stories share how a congregation has continued to hand down this good news that Jesus is risen, which has cultivated a call in persons to be part of a growing need for students to prepare to be pastors, teachers and leaders.

You will also read stories of how the response to this good news has cultivated a call in persons to share financial resources, which continue to prepare leaders for the mission of the church.

There is another kind of legacy this issue of Story represents. It is the legacy of Luther Seminary as a welcoming place for immigrants, for newcomers. Luther Seminary is a place that prepares pastors, teachers and leaders for a new generation of immigrants who have come to a strange land. You will read a story of how one of our graduates is helping to share the Good News with a community in Spanish.

Another definition of legacy is an envoy or group of persons sent on a mission. You will read some stories of how groups are embodying this good news by tending to kids who are at risk and feeding people who are hungry.

This edition is filled with rich stories of the legacy of good news and how Luther Seminary is responding to support this mission of educating leaders. This includes ways that congregations have identified, nurtured and sent their best and brightest to prepare for leadership and how individuals have planned and left a legacy gift to support students as they prepare to be leaders for the church. I invite you to get to know these legacy sharers, leaders and their stories.

Robin Steinke
President
Luther Seminary honors winter graduates

In December, winter graduates of Luther Seminary shared in a time of fellowship with one another, staff and faculty at the winter commencement dinner. During this gathering, many reminisced about their time at Luther and celebrated their accomplishments.

To view photos from the event, visit www.flickr.com/photos/lutherseminary. Select Albums, and then choose 2014 Winter Commencement.

Luther Seminary celebrates and honors life of Martin Luther King Jr.

On Monday, Jan. 19, the Luther Seminary community gathered to reflect on Martin Luther King Jr.’s influence and learn about ways to continue his legacy.

The day opened in a plenary session with Christena Cleveland, author of “Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart.” Worship followed, with a sermon given by Alika Galloway, co-pastor of Kwanzaa Community Church in Minneapolis.

The events continued with a community meal and a question-and-answer session with David Preus, bishop emeritus of the American Lutheran Church. Attendees then had the opportunity to take part in breakout sessions and closing worship.

If you missed these MLK Day events, you may watch many of the day’s sessions at www.youtube.com/lutherseminary. To see photos from the day, visit www.flickr.com/photos/lutherseminary. Select Albums, and then choose 2015 MLK Day.

Mid-Winter Convocation tackles Religious but Not Spiritual conversation

The 2015 Mid-Winter Convocation took place at Luther Seminary from Jan. 28-30 and focused on the theme Religious but Not Spiritual? It was framed by lively exchanges between a social scientist, a theologian and a pastor as they reclaimed the vibrancy and authenticity of the distinctly spiritual and religious way of Jesus. These keynote speakers were Nancy Ammerman, Lois Malcolm and Nadia-Bolz Weber. Attendees also had the opportunity to attend a variety of informative workshops and gather for rich conversation and fellowship.

Watch videos of the three keynote speakers at www.luthersem.edu/convo. To see photos from the event, visit www.flickr.com/photos/lutherseminary. Select Albums, and then choose 2015 Convocation.
A legacy of leadership
Minnesota church claims 14 Luther Seminary graduates

By Kelly O’Hara Dyer, Correspondent

IN THE SMALL TOWN OF VIRGINIA, MINN., POPULATION ROUGHLY 8,700, OUR SAVIOR’S LUTHERAN CHURCH HAS QUIETLY ACHIEVED SEVERAL MILESTONES THAT MANY LARGER CHURCHES CAN’T CLAIM.

Since its founding by Norwegian immigrants in 1897, the church, located in the heart of Minnesota’s economically buffeted Mesabi Iron Range, has seen at least 14 sons and daughters of its congregation pursue higher levels of theological education and ordination. Of those, 13 attended Luther Seminary.

In addition, the congregation at Our Savior’s has also had a number of members complete lay programs through the Northeastern Minnesota Synod’s School of Lay Ministry. One such individual, Judy Peliska, is currently serving as a synodically authorized minister at First Lutheran Church in Buhl, Minn.

According to Brenda Tibbetts, associate in ministry at Our Savior’s, the church has proved a fertile ground for growing future church leaders for a number of reasons.

“A lot of it is having pastoral staff and members of the congregation recognizing those gifts and encouraging people to explore using those gifts,” she says about identifying and guiding individuals into advanced theological education.

“We utilize our youth a lot in our worship services, so they...
are very comfortable doing readings and with communion and prayers. It gives them a taste for something they may not have thought about, which I think is really important. Particularly after confirmation, we want to keep our kids plugged in.”

As for other avenues of higher learning, Tibbetts notes that nine people from the congregation have gone through the lay school program.

“I’m a rostered layperson myself,” she says. “Previously [Our Savior’s] always had a full-time senior pastor and a three-quarter-time ordained pastor as an associate, so they were willing to try something new in having me, an associate in ministry. I think that has opened eyes to different avenues for serving.”

Another program Tibbetts is quick to credit for Our Savior’s track record of producing church leaders is rooted in the region’s reputation as a tourist destination and area of rugged beauty.

“Our Savior’s has had a long relationship with Camp Vermilion, an American Lutheran Church Bible camp on Lake Vermilion, and that partnership continues through Voyageurs Lutheran Ministry, which also includes Camp Hiawatha in Deer River, Minn.,” she says. “Many folks here credit outdoor camping ministry as instrumental in our young men and women discerning a call into ordained ministry. It’s just a marvelous way to encounter God in a different setting and I think it plays a huge role in developing leaders of all kinds for the church.”

Finally, Our Savior’s has also forged a rich and ongoing relationship with Luther Seminary itself, regularly introducing high school students to various programs on campus and giving them an early taste of what seminary life might be like.

“Our students hear a lot about what’s offered at Luther Seminary, through KAIROS [continuing education classes for pastors] and Lifelong Learning [courses],” Tibbetts says. “With the Lifelong Learning program, the purpose is not necessarily a route to ordination, but it’s developing leadership of all kinds for the church, which is really important. They have enough fun and enjoy the classes so much that they all want to come back.”

Elizabeth Cheney, the most recent graduate of Luther Seminary to come from the Our Savior’s congregation, concurs.

“Our Savior’s does a really good job of connecting with youth,” says Cheney, who is currently serving at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Tower, Minn. “Our Savior’s was really a faith-forming community for me, and now being able to do ministry on the Iron Range where I grew up, that’s been really important to me.”

As for the future, Tibbetts is confident that the Holy Spirit will continue to call more generations of church leaders from the congregation at Our Savior’s.

“Some of my high school kids have been saying that they’re being called to ministry, too,” she says.

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Our Savior’s Lutheran Church excels at identifying gifts for ministry within its congregation and encouraging those gifts to grow. Here are the fruits of that ministry.

Charles Johnson, ’30
Arnold Nelson, ’34
Robert Moberg, ’81 (currently serving in Wisconsin)
Mark Braaten, ’81 (currently serving in Texas)
Joel LiaBraaten, ’82
Glen Berg-Moberg, ’85 (currently serving at St. Anthony Park Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minn.)
Jerry LiaBraaten, ’86
Rochelle Melander, ’90
Brian Crockett, ’90 (currently serving at Teller & Brevig Mission in Alaska)
*Linda Johnson Seyenkulo,’93 (Her husband, Jens, is the bishop of Liberia)
Paul Simmons, ’96 (currently serving in Wisconsin)
*Melinda Melhus, ’01
Mike Carlson, ’12 (currently serving at St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church in Mahtomedi, Minn.)
Elizabeth Cheney, ’14 (the congregation’s first distributed learning student to graduate from Luther Seminary; currently serving at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Tower, Minn.)
*Did not grow up attending Our Savior’s, but did so as young adults discerning calls to ministry
Luther grads respond to changing needs in oil-rich North Dakota

By John Klawiter, M.Div. ‘12
There used to be two reasons why the Western North Dakota Synod was nicknamed “Siberia” for those seeking a new call. One reason is obvious—because both can be bitterly cold. The other reason—nobody lives there—no longer applies.

Western North Dakota, once considered one of the least visited regions in the country, is now one of the largest growing areas of the state.

What changed? Suddenly there was an oil boom. Tourism picked up—and some are choosing to stay.

**Remarkable changes**

Ben Loven, ’09, took his first call at First Lutheran Church in Williston in September 2009. “When I got here, the boom hadn’t quite started,” Loven said. “There’s a big highway, U.S. 85, which goes through the Badlands. I met five cars on that [first] trip. Now, you’d see five cars in five seconds. The change is unbelievable.”

Forty miles south, at Wilmington Lutheran Church in Arnegard, Dan Paulson, ’96, says that his community is eight miles due west from the busiest part of the oil fields. “A lot of times I need to take a right and turn around to go east [because the highway is too busy to cross].” he says.
Beth Anderson, ’01, has served as synod ministry coordinator since 2009. She says that a ministry needs assessment conducted by the ELCA churchwide office in 2007-2008 showed that the stories of western North Dakota were about decline and economic concerns. “Then the boom came,” Anderson says. “And it was like a coin flipped.”

Williston, as a community, is getting younger and people are having babies. According to Loven, some people stick around, but some are here for three months, and then they’re gone, usually back home.

“When I arrived, the population was around 12,000,” Loven says. “Now it’s over 35,000—and that’s just the permanent population.”

**Diverse ministry**

While the story of North Dakota might appear to be about a boom, the depths of those affected by it have created one of the most unique ministry fields imaginable.

“There was no housing, no shelters in place [when the boom happened],” Anderson says. “The churches were the first stop when getting off Amtrak. People had a job, but nowhere to go.”

Pastors face the challenge of how to do ministry with people who are only in town temporarily. “Some of the people on the rigs are working 18-hour days for a month,” Loven says. “Then they have three days off, so they’re sleeping or catching up, or they’re heading back home. Housing is such a huge issue, a lot of people don’t want to bring their families here. It’s an interesting population of people.”

Paulson has firsthand experience with ministry in the oil fields. He retired as a pastor a couple years ago—but soon took up a different kind of work.

“I had two people [from my congregation] who were the head of a gauging business,” Paulson says. “They told me, ‘You’re not going to retire. We need you.’ So they taught me how to gauge for 22 months in and amongst the people.”

This opportunity brought Paulson together with people from all over the world who came to North Dakota to make a living. “Many of them have left their families and homes so that they can come here to make enough to send home and pay bills and live,” Paulson says. “Some are now starting to establish themselves as residents of the area. That’s fantastic. There’s a lot of new housing too, not just the temporary housing. People are putting down roots and that’s exciting. We’ve got some growth here that I never expected. ... There’s opportunity beyond belief. We’re excited about that!”

Paulson joined the ministry later in life, after an entrepreneurial career in cabinet-making and contracting. He was always self-employed. “When I [gauged] those 22 months, I wasn’t preaching from the pulpit, but I was teaching and helping people by being pastoral,” Paulson says. “I had a congregation of men that was growing profoundly. ... It was 22 months of true ministry—of hope and promise.”
Paulson admits that he’s too old to continue working in the oil fields, but he did recently return to the pulpit. Paulson and his wife, Kathleen, who shares her husband’s current call, are looking to help ease the succession for the next pastoral leaders in their present contexts.

He reflects on how much things have changed from when he began doing rural ministry in 1996 and where he is now. “Sometimes, in the back of my mind, [I thought] ministry out here was just about sustaining—helping people in the demise,” Paulson says. “I did a lot of burying, but not a lot of marrying, and very few baptisms. That’s turned around. People are coming home. They’ve come back and brought their careers with them. Professional careers are coming home: farmers, doctors, nurses. There are a lot of opportunities.”

Gerald Roise, ’07, also came to ordained ministry later in life. After 35 years farming and ranching, he has a unique perspective on the boom, even though his call near Minot is more removed from the middle of the busiest boomers.

How things have changed for Roise is that he’s seeing more people willing to stay in North Dakota. “I’ve appreciated the oil business because it’s kept my kids here,” says Roise, whose son took over the ranch that has been run by the family for four generations. “Now, when you graduate from college, you can stay here.”

Unexpected needs

With the oil boom, the types of ministry situations have changed significantly. Many people are literally living on a huge nest egg, but not everyone.

“People have money to invest,” Roise says. “There’s a huge disparity going on. What most outsiders don’t realize is that the person owning the land doesn’t necessarily own the mineral rights underneath the surface.”

During the 1930s, people sold the mineral rights below their land in order to scrape by. If they didn’t ever buy those rights back, then even if they own the land, they don’t own what’s below it. And the promise of work for those moving to North Dakota doesn’t offset some surprises when they get here. Many from southern climates are not accustomed to the tenacious Midwest winters.

“What we noticed, in terms of impact to the church, was that people were coming into the office for basic necessities like gas,” Loven says. “They’d used their last dime to get here. They’d be employed, but needed something to get them to their first paycheck. People were staying in their cars.”

And with wealth also comes greed. Prices for hotel rooms and rent went way up. It’s a change that doesn’t just affect newcomers to town. “It stressed the fixed income seniors who are now dealing with higher rent,” Loven says. “A lot of people left because they couldn’t afford it or some sold their house they bought in the ‘60s.”

Booming ministry, continued on page 29
Naples, located on the southwestern tip of Florida, is both a prime destination for snowbirds fleeing colder locales and a historically wealthy and prosperous retirement area.

At the same time, southwestern Florida as a whole has been changing in recent years. One change is the fast rise in population of members of Hispanic and Latino communities from around the world. And with this rise in population, an attendant rise in poverty and other problems stemming from those issues has begun to surface.

“After living in Naples for a few years, there’s no doubt that the per capita income is very high in this town,” Wigdahl says. “And along with that, a lot of the communities here are gated communities. I began to ask the question of our congregation, ‘Are we aware that for a church, a gated community is really not a very good model?’ I also asked, ‘Is a congregation...
a gated community? And of course the rhetorical response is no. It is a community that reaches out and welcomes all people. For us to do ministry beyond this [area], we need to go where the people are.”

In gauging this growth and anticipating the needs of these new arrivals to south Florida, Emmanuel has acted preemptively in a number of ways.

For one, in 2007 the church bought 25 acres of land to the northeast of its present location in downtown Naples. “Estimates have said that by the year 2025, 65 percent of the population of Collier County will be to the northeast of the present city,” Wigdahl says. “That’s a big shift. The area where we’ve moved, to the northeast, is an area that does not match the economy of our location downtown. This makes a real change in terms of doing ministry.”

Another way Emmanuel is planning to meet the changes in its region is through more directly serving these new communities.

Two years ago, the church called Pastor José Lebrón, a former pediatrician and elementary school teacher in the Dominican Republic, to join them in a mission development project for their area. Lebrón was called specifically to serve these new Hispanic and Latino arrivals, and to minister to their communities in ways that reflect the needs of those congregants.

As a result, Lebrón has recently begun offering the church’s first Spanish-speaking services at its main location, with plans in place to eventually transition to a new congregation start in the location to the northeast.

“With José, he’s already helped us to understand that when you use the word Hispanic or Latino, you can’t assume that everyone from that culture bears a similar identity,” Wigdahl says. “We have people that are coming up here from Mexico, from Cuba, from Central America, and every part of that has a contextual component in terms of the Hispanic culture. We’re at around 50 people now, who attend [the Spanish services] on a regular basis,” he says. “It’s an interesting thing, because location plays a major role in terms of how people assemble. We are aware that once we move to our new location, we might be more convenient in that setting than in our present site.”

Janet Anderson is a parishioner at Emmanuel, and also part of the team coordinating this new outreach effort. She is also a former longtime chair of Luther Seminary’s board of trustees. Anderson says the Emmanuel congregation recognizes that as the needs of its community change, the church wants to be able to evolve to serve and embrace their new neighbors in ways that meet their needs.

“It is intentionally a multicultural, diverse ministry in an area that is 40 percent Latino, and more than 50 percent Caucasian, with small percentages of African-Americans, Haitians and others,” Anderson says. “Pastor Lebrón is called to serve the entire community. That’s what makes us different. We are a hybrid.”

Wigdahl also says that Emmanuel’s plan to serve its wider community has been a deliberate and considered one.

“We’re following more of what you’d consider an accompaniment model, where we come alongside the community,” he says. “We don’t impose ourselves, but we want to be able to serve that community where the needs are. When we moved out to the northeast and asked what the greatest needs were, it became apparent that an after school program was needed [to serve students in three nearby schools]. That was a window of opportunity for us.”

Wigdahl says his congregation is also actively considering the future of the larger church as a whole, and that during their contemplation, they have come to believe they can play an integral part in cultivating future church leaders from within these Hispanic and Latino communities.

“Within this congregation, we have a lot of retired people, but they’re looking for a deeper meaning than just coming down here and playing golf and relaxing,” Wigdahl says. “That’s the heart of who we are in terms of Word and Sacrament ministry, and shaping the life of Christ in a worshipful setting. We have a great opportunity here … to have this congregation be a catalyst in raising up a new generation of leaders for the church in the 21st century. We have an opportunity to broaden the work of the church within the demographics that are here. For instance, it was difficult for us to find a pastor from a Spanish-speaking background to even be able to fill the call that we were extending! They’re just not out there [because] the Lutheran church has not raised up those leaders yet.” 📌
Transforming lives
Minneapolis’ Mount Olivet forms partnerships to feed hungry kids

By John Klawiter, M.Div ’12

AS THE PASTOR OF MEMBERSHIP, COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND MEN’S MINISTRY AT MINNEAPOLIS’ MOUNT OLIVET, THE LARGEST ELCA CHURCH IN MINNESOTA, BILL MACLEAN, ’11, RECEIVES NUMEROUS REQUESTS FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT.

“We get a lot of calls from people and worthwhile organizations wanting money,” says MacLean, a former U.S. Bank executive who calls himself a “recovering CPA.” Before partnering with a person or organization, he says, the church requires that two criteria are met.

“We need to have a member who is an advocate for the organization and then, we need opportunities for member engagement,” MacLean says. “We aren’t in the business of handing out money, but in transformation and changing lives.”

In one recent case, the chance to transform lives came through Rob Williams, executive director of The Sheridan Story. The organization was created in 2010 when Williams learned that kids were stealing food from their schools on Friday so that they had something to eat over the weekend. The Sheridan Story responded to this need by creating a network of weekend food programs.

Williams asked MacLean and Mount Olivet to participate in helping kids in their own community who were hungry.

A high percentage of students at nearby Washburn High School were food insecure and disadvantaged. “This surprised a lot of our members,” says MacLean, noting that the school once had a reputation for having many wealthy students. “Now, our congregation is shocked by how food insecure it is there.”

Mount Olivet teamed up with the local synagogue, Shir Tikvah, and its rabbi, Michael Latz, to work with The Sheridan Story. The congrega-
Volunteers from Mount Olivet Lutheran Church work with The Sheridan Story and synagogue Shir Tikvah to ensure kids won’t go hungry over the weekend.

Distributions began providing meals to Washburn and Ramsey Junior High in 2013, but the program didn’t gain the hoped for momentum.

Instead of giving up, however, the partners shifted their focus to a younger population, where the students were more likely to utilize the program on a regular basis.

“We’ve begun a relationship with Green Central Elementary because they had a need,” MacLean says. “Now we have 47 elementary school kids signed up. It’s a weekend program since, during the week, they’re covered [and have meals provided] by the school district.”

The students receive a plastic bag filled with nutritious food that lasts through the weekend. Homeless shelters don’t allow the kids to bring the food in, so the majority of students live in an apartment, with parents who may be struggling or with another relative.

“[The response] proved to me that there was a need,” MacLean says of the decision to work with the younger population. “Maybe it was their age, but we wanted an ongoing, encouraging relationship, and we wanted them to have a place to hang and talk. We hand out the food on Friday mornings. ... We’re still figuring out the [partnership with] Green Central, but it’s fun to serve with Shir Tikvah because we both strongly believe in serving our community.”

For MacLean, it’s been quite a circuitous route from business lunches in the boardrooms to handing out bags of food to kids in classrooms.

“I chose to go into the field of accounting in college, but I can’t for the life of me understand why. I’m an extrovert, but as a CPA, I was isolated and doing cubical work. For years the world of institutional sales and trading was exhilarating and lucrative. But at the height of this career I was wrestling with God over a different calling,” he says. “I wasn’t at peace because I hadn’t been obedient to God’s sense of calling to go into ministry.”

In 2004, he started at Luther Seminary, but continued working full time until his internship year at Bethlehem Lutheran in Minneapolis. And now, as one of eight pastors on staff at Mount Olivet, he’s found a way to use his financial background in his ministry work. The partnership with The Sheridan Story and Shir Tikvah is just one example of how MacLean has found his calling.

“I just believe that by literally being the hands and feet of Christ in the community, it impacts the person receiving, but I also think it impacts the person giving even more—they don’t see it until it happens,” he says.

To learn more about The Sheridan Story, visit www.The Sheridan Story.com.
Small community, big change

Congregation meets needs with community resource center

By John Klawiter, M.Div. ’12

WHEN ST. ANDREW’S LUTHERAN, A LARGE CHURCH IN THE ST. PAUL SUBURB OF MAHTOMEDI, DECIDED TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THE NEIGHBORHOOD AROUND IT, BIG THINGS STARTED TO HAPPEN.

The congregation already had a reputation for doing great ministry abroad, including Vision Slovakia and Vision Jamaica, when former pastor John Hogenson arrived in 2008. While working on the vision and mission of St. Andrew’s, he asked people what initiatives they thought the congregation should consider.

“They said, ‘We want to do more locally,’” says current executive pastor Sarah Breckenridge, ‘95.

After doing some outreach, the congregation found that they were unaware of the real issues facing their neighbors. “In 2008, there was the recession. We were surprised to discover that folks facing homelessness was a growing need in our area and we wanted to do something to help prevent that,” Breckenridge says. “[We had] families hit with divorce, loss of income, loss of net worth, foreclosures galore, were not sure how to make mortgage payments—and we wanted to do something. We were called to do something.”

In 2010, St. Andrew’s made opening a community resource center one of the three-year goals in its strategic plan. By March 2011, the dream was a reality. “What was going to take three years happened in four months,” Breckenridge says. “The congregation responded to a forum and people showed up with the means to fund it. They wanted it started immediately, before it got cold for the winter.”

As pastor, Breckenridge oversaw the project. But she needed someone to take calls and be a presence in the community. That’s when Liz Schreier heard the call to help.

“Calls started coming right away, oddly enough,” Schreier
The need in the community was highlighted during church and the congregation started to talk about it. I attended a forum and felt compelled to be a part of it.”

She noticed that the suburban mentality was still keeping people from coming to the CRC. “Your first thought isn’t to find a shelter,” Schreier says, acknowledging that many people who needed the CRC had been middle class. Suddenly, she noticed more people in the church pews, in the grocery store and at sporting events that were using the CRC. “People don’t look like [what the stereotypical idea] of what homelessness looks like. People don’t know that you slept in your car and there’s no way to recognize it because they blend in.”

Schreier is now the executive director of the CRC. The attitude of those who work there is critical to the impact that the CRC has on the community. How people are treated matters.

“[The people who come to the CRC] are listened to without judgment and assured they are not alone,” she says. “We not only provide shelter, food and other basic need items but just as importantly, if not more, we provide hope! We can pray with our guests, do devotions with our guests and walk alongside them, as they work the plan we create together for a better life.”

That’s what the CRC can provide someone that goes beyond a government program or a service agency. The community resource center does provide shelter, food and other emergency needs, but it’s also about the less tangible things.

“What we find most often is that they need someone to talk to, to feel heard,” Schreier says. “They feel very alone, lacking connection and community. We become like family.”

“This re-energized the congregation,” Breckenridge says. “They are proud of their church and that they can let their friends and co-workers know if they are struggling to stay in their homes, that their church can help. And the outpouring of volunteers who want to be a part of its ministry has been a huge blessing. They love putting their faith into action in this way. And we need lots of volunteers, for everything from driving vans to making meals, from sorting donations and playing with children to sitting next to them at a computer helping them with job and housing searches, encouraging them along the way.”

“Some people come and have never been to church,” Schreier says. “But they leave the CRC and say, ‘This is what it means to be a Christian.’ It becomes pretty clear that at the CRC, people are living out their faith.”

How does Breckenridge reflect on the CRC theologically? “It’s about bringing good news to the oppressed. In Luke, Jesus gets thrown out of town, but I love the image of bringing the good news. You don’t just speak it,” Breckenridge says. “It’s in blankets and food and housing—and people hear it. People know that they can come in and be prayed for. They can be accepted. It was part of a dream and it’s amazing to see it come to life. Part of it is the Lazarus story, when Jesus says to ‘unbind him.’ We are in the business of unbinding people. They’re bound by something that is keeping people from what they can be to live in the promises of God’s children. That’s what got me on fire about being a part of this.”

St. Andrew’s has become the place that the county sends people to for housing and shelter assistance. More than 90 percent of homeless families who work with the CRC are able to move into more permanent housing within 34 days, compared to the 60-plus days that is the norm for most agencies. In just four years, the community resource center has become a valuable resource in providing real help, hope and healing to their neighbors in need. Last year alone, more than 5,500 free Thursday night meals were provided, 669 families received emergency food kits, 87 homeless families were given emergency shelter and food and 98 families were kept from homelessness.

The CRC has a food shelf for basic needs, job search assistance, a free community meal on Thursday nights and a nursery so that parents can receive support without the distraction of their child while talking to a staff member or filling out paperwork. They are always looking for people to donate their time and resources, since they are fully funded through donations.

“This showed that the key is in the partnerships,” Breckenridge says. “There was no intent to do all of this for ourselves.”

While St. Andrew’s would love to partner with other communities who are looking to do a community resource center for themselves, they realize that each context is different. “We are excited to share our resources and what we’ve learned, so other congregations can partner in making a difference around issues of homelessness in their communities. We really just started with a desire to start tackling the issue and a part-time person to answer the phone and it just grew from there,” Schreier says.

Adds Breckenridge, “We’ve seen God’s fingerprints all over the ministry of the community resource center, making a difference in the lives of too many to count.”

If you’d like more information on the CRC, contact center@saintandrews.org or visit www.saintandrews.org/communityresourcecenter.
Unique gifts
Luther alums send church staff to seminary

By Kelly O’Hara Dyer, Correspondent

AN ACT OF KINDNESS EXTENDED TO MATT VALAN DURING HIS SEMINARY DAYS HAS LED HIM TO PAY THAT GENEROSITY FORWARD THREE TIMES SO FAR.

Valan, ‘93, has served as senior pastor at Christ the King Lutheran in Moorhead, Minn., since 1997. During that time, he and his wife, Kathy, ‘96, have found a way to support three church staff members in pursuing their own seminary education with a combination of flexible work schedules and encouragement to study during traditional work hours.

Valan traces the idea back to his own experiences as a student, when another church he worked with offered him a similar arrangement.

“Where this came from is that I was once in a similar situation,” Valan says of the unique arrangement between the church and some of its staff. “I didn’t go through seminary until I was in my late 30s. A church called me up and said they were aware of the youth ministry gifts I had. They said, ‘If you come and work for us during your four years of school, we will pay you a modest salary and you give us Wednesday nights and Sundays and summer trips and whatever else works. The rest of the time, you shut your door and be a seminary student.’ I was just so thankful for that gift. As a young father, there was no way I could have done it otherwise. So I’ve tried to do that here.”

Valan says he is constantly looking for individuals who display gifts that indicate that seminary might be an option for them.

“If I see someone that truly loves people and loves God, and essentially, keeps those two precepts of Jesus: Love the Lord thy God with all your heart, soul and mind and love your neighbor as yourself … I will approach that person and say, ‘Have you ever considered following your call into seminary?’ And then we basically say, ‘We’ll hire you and you can do your job for us, but we’ll give you as much time as you need to get your degree.’ And that’s worked wonderfully.”

The first Christ the King staff person to benefit from this
arrangement was Laurie Neill, ’12, who has since gone on to become the pastor of First Lutheran Church in Fargo, N.D.

“With Laurie, she came to our church as a single mom, and the only reason she came here was that we were the only church offering a Wednesday night service,” Valan says. “All of a sudden, we noticed this woman had amazing gifts. We asked her to work for us five hours a week, and the next year, it became 10 hours and for a couple of years, that’s what she did. At about year five, we said, ‘Would you like to go down to [Luther Seminary] and explore the possibilities they have?’”

A second staff member, Michele Jenson, is currently in her first year of the M.Div. program. Jenson has been a longtime staff member at the church, serving as “everything from council president to director of hospitality to children’s ministry director to contemporary bandleader,” Valan says. “A year ago, she and I went out to lunch and I said, ‘Look, you’re in your 40s, now’s the time. If you want to be a pastor, let’s make this happen.’ And now she’s finishing up her first year.”

In addition, the church’s director of children’s ministry and office manager, Jessica Thielke, is also currently attending Luther Seminary and will graduate in May.

“Jessica had been a student intern here during her years at Concordia,” Valan says. “We called her up two years ago and said, ‘Would you like to come work for us in Moorhead?’ She said, ‘Not really. I’m happy [where I’m at].’ And I said, ‘I remember you’ve always wanted to do some advanced education. If you come to work for us here in Moorhead, we’ll give you all the time that you need to study. Do your job, but whenever it’s quiet, shut your door, write your papers and study.’”

With that inducement, Thielke accepted the job.

“I have been blessed with a supportive congregation and staff while I’ve been pursuing my degree,” says Thielke, who is pursuing her Master of Arts in children, youth and family ministry. “The staff has been very generous in gifting me time. Pastor Matt has also given me the freedom to try out what I am actively learning, which has been a great way to get a ‘hands-on’ piece with what I am learning in the classroom.”

Valan insists that this somewhat unusual arrangement benefits both sides of the equation.

“What we receive as a congregation, and we’ve seen it in all three situations, are the fresh ideas that emerge from the seminary, whether in preaching or administration or youth and family ministry,” he says. “They’ll come back from spending time at the seminary and they just inspire us.”
ON JUNE 30, FIVE FACULTY MEMBERS RETIRED FROM LUTHER SEMINARY. HERE, CURRENT LUTHER SEMINARY FACULTY MEMBERS REFLECT ON THE LEGACY OF THEIR FORMER COLLEAGUES.

Richard “Dick” Nysse, Professor Emeritus of Old Testament
Dick Nysse joined the seminary as assistant professor of Old Testament in 1978 and was named professor in 1993.

“One thing about being a servant leader which I think is truer of Dick than almost anyone I know is that servant leaders raise up other voices, support collaboration and seek to see things whole. From my earliest time on this faculty, Dick was deeply involved in working with our efforts to teach online. He was never afraid to say that he was learning as he went, and he worked hard to invite other people into that learning. I’m not sure we ever could have accomplished what we have in moving into distributed learning without Dick’s thoughtful, patient, tireless and wise work in those arenas.”

—Mary Hess, Professor of Educational Leadership and Chair of the Leadership Division

Rick Foss, Director Emeritus of Contextual Education and President Emeritus
Rick Foss was director of Contextual Learning from 2008-2012, and stepped in as interim president in January 2013, serving in that role until his retirement.

“I’ve known Rick since I was a child. He belonged to the same congregation that I grew up in, Dennison Lutheran Church, which is about 50 miles south of here, and his father was the pastor there.

“Some of Rick’s most important work for Luther Seminary actually began long before he ever joined us on the faculty. He was the bishop in eastern North Dakota, and he has a keen interest in theological education. He was deeply involved in working with students, and with pastors in their first call. He was always interested in, ‘What is the student experience like? How can an internship be a really formative experience? How can the church help students after graduation move effectively into their ministry contexts under first call?’ Rick was always one of the bishops who was out ‘treasure hunting,’ which was his expression. He was always trying to identify, ‘Who are the graduates who will be best able to meet the needs of these congregations?’ He always wanted people to be able to feel that their gifts were going to be well utilized; to have a sense that they were known and valued, and have a sense of inviting people into that shared ministry. And when Rick retired as a bishop, we were in need of a new director of contextual learning and he seemed like a natural because he was so deeply connected to the life of the church. He understood the challenges of ministry, and first and foremost, Rick is a people person. It was a gift to us that he could step in with his lifetime of connections and sense of the church, and sense of what it takes to create a really effective learning situation for students.”

—Craig Koester, Academic Dean and the Asher O. and Carrie Nasby Chair of New Testament

Craig Van Gelder, Professor Emeritus of Congregational Mission
Craig Van Gelder joined Luther Seminary in 1998 following 10 years as professor of domestic missiology at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Mich.

“Craig really did play a leadership role here at the seminary in bringing to the fore the missional emphasis, along with other colleagues. He has a very organizational mind and he’s somebody who is very good at implementing ideas—taking a conceptual idea and turning
it into a framework for action. It was Craig who developed the congregational mission and leadership program here at Luther Seminary with others, but he played a real leadership role there. He really sort of galvanized and brought that to the forefront.

“Craig also comes out of the Reformed tradition and he’s not Lutheran, so he brought to students a way to help think theologically about leadership for mission, and about what it means to participate in God’s reign in the world, particularly in terms of starting and developing churches, but also in terms of working for justice outside of the church. He was very interested in how we help students think in terms of, ‘How do we evangelize and how do we start churches and how do we become leaders of communities that are starting new churches?’ His legacy here really is going to be our congregational and missional leadership activity. It is not just about sustaining existing congregations, but about starting new ones and growing and revitalizing existing ones.”

—Lois Malcolm, Professor of Systematic Theology

Sarah Henrich, Professor Emeritus of New Testament

Sarah Henrich came to the seminary in 1992 from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, where she had been assistant professor of New Testament since 1989.

“Sarah and I have known each other since graduate school at Yale, around 1983 or so. We had the same interests, same teachers and same classes. The first thing that comes to mind about Sarah is that she is a very curious person who is full of interests. She loves to read and think, and she loves both art and architecture, as well. She specializes in the subject of ancient clothing, and she’s also really, really deeply interested in cities in Europe. She and her husband to this day travel extensively in Europe, visiting the major cities and going to the museums and to the churches.

“The second thing I would say about Sarah is that she always shares her interests with students, and opens all that up to them and gets them involved, as well.

“Another hallmark of Sarah is that she treats people like adults. She always treated her students as what they are, adult learners. I really respected her for the way she never, ever treated her students condescendingly, or thought of her students as objects that needed to be ‘manipulated’ or ‘formed’ to be taught. She set up her classes so that students were very engaged, and she always made sure that the focus was on her students in her classes and not on her.

“I think Sarah embodies the whole spirit of learning as a place for trying things out and letting your curiosity be your guide, rather than just learning dogma and echoing it back. She is just a lifelong learner, and I think her students always picked that up from her, that you don’t stop learning once you graduate from seminary.”

—David Fredrickson, Professor of New Testament

Walter “Skip” Sundberg, Professor Emeritus of Church History

Walter Sundberg worked at Luther Seminary from 1978-1981 as an instructor in systematic theology and returned as assistant professor of church history in 1984. He was named associate professor in 1986 and professor in 1994.

“Walter brought so much to the seminary. He is somebody who the students really loved. Whether they agreed with him or not, they always felt that he respected them and that he worked very hard as a teacher—and he was an excellent one. He really gave students a lot in terms of understanding the ancient and modern periods of church history, and understanding certain issues that the church has always faced. Skip really combined a pastoral concern for students with a deep, deep knowledge, both of the early church and the modern period. He sought to convey that and was very successful at it.

“He was also a considerate and helpful colleague, and he really sought to build up the community here, both among the faculty and students. As a colleague, he was very forthright, and he often represented positions that not very many people took. He did it in an honest way, with a lot of integrity and a lot of pastoral concern for individuals and for the church.”

—Mary Jane Haemig, Professor of Church History
Congratulations to Iris de León-Hartshorn, the recipient of this year’s Race, Church and Change award! De León-Hartshorn is the director of transformative peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA. The award was presented to her at Luther Seminary on April 8. While on campus, de León-Hartshorn also preached and enjoyed a meal with the community.

The Race, Church and Change Award recognizes leaders and communities who have significantly impacted society through ministries of racial justice and reconciliation. De León-Hartshorn was recognized for being a leader in racial and gender justice in the church since 1996.

For more information about De León-Hartshorn and the Race, Church and Change Award, visit www.luthersem.edu/rcc.

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Reformation Arts Tour

Please join us for an enriching tour of Reformation sights and sounds in Germany. Leading up to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, the year 2015 has been designated as the year of the Bible and the image. In addition to exploring Reformation texts and images, this fully inclusive 12-day tour will highlight the powerful effects of music, including that of J.S. Bach, on the spread of this movement. The tour will be led by professional local guides.

Oct. 22-Nov. 2 2015

www.luthersem.edu/art_tour

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Celebration of Biblical Preaching

**Speakers:**

- **Otis Moss III** | Pastor, Trinity United Church of Christ, Chicago
- **Karoline Lewis** | Alvin N. Rogness Associate Professor of Homiletics, Luther Seminary
- **Luke Powery** | Dean of Duke Chapel and Associate Professor of Homiletics, Duke Divinity School
- **Michael Brown** | Senior Minister, Marble Collegiate Church
- **Barbara Lundblad** | Joe R. Engle Professor Emeritus of Preaching, Union Theological Seminary

The Courage to Preach

We all know that preaching is no easy task. It takes courage to get into that pulpit week after week and say something that’s worth hearing—let alone something on behalf of the biblical text and on behalf of God. But what does it mean to have the courage to preach? Is it just bravery or a mustering up of sheer will? And why do we need it? Why is this question worth asking of our preaching? This year’s Celebration speakers will help us enter into the vulnerable space that is the place of courage for proclamation. We will be invited to imagine courage in different ways, not just for the sake of preaching itself, but for the sake of gaining a renewed sense of preaching from the heart.

Oct. 5-7

Luther Seminary | St. Paul, Minn.

www.luthersem.edu/celebration
## Take your ministry to the next level with KAIROS!
Continuing education opportunities for pastors, associates in ministry, diaconal ministers and lay leaders

### May

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<td>5-7</td>
<td>Speaking the Word Freely</td>
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<td>11-15</td>
<td>Festival of Homiletics—Preaching From the Mountain: Heralds of Good Tidings Denver</td>
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<td>1-3</td>
<td>Daring Faith™: Show Up, Be Seen, Live Brave™</td>
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<td>3-6</td>
<td>Collaboratory: Turning Hair-Brained Ideas Into Sustainable Ministries</td>
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<td>14-19</td>
<td>Mini-MBA for Pastors and Church Leaders: Leading and Managing Change in a Complex Environment Augsburg College, Minneapolis</td>
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<td>15-Dec. 31</td>
<td>Discerning God’s Mission: Trust-Building and Collaborative Leadership for Collective Insight</td>
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<td>22-24</td>
<td>Storying Faith: Teaching the Bible to Adults</td>
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<td>22-25</td>
<td>School for Lay Ministry</td>
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<td>Webcast: Working Preacher Lectionary Study—Ordinary 18-26</td>
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<td>6-10</td>
<td>Emotional Intelligence and Human Relations Skills*</td>
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<td>8-9</td>
<td>Job, the Cross and the Question of Suffering</td>
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<td>13-15</td>
<td>New Visions for the Long Pastorate</td>
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<td>29-31</td>
<td>Rethinking Confirmation: Signs of Life in Times of Change</td>
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<td>Transforming Conflicts From the Inside Out: Compassionate Communication in the Church</td>
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<td>12-14</td>
<td>Leading Through Coaching</td>
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<td>25-26</td>
<td>Stepping Up to Staffing and Supervision of Church Staff</td>
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<td>Webcast: Films and Faith—Exploring Christianity Through Visual Media</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Webcast: Working Preacher Lectionary Study—Ordinary 27-34</td>
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<tr>
<td>28-Oct. 2</td>
<td>Discerning God’s Mission (group week at Luther Seminary)</td>
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<td>Celebration of Biblical Preaching: The Courage to Preach</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Preaching the Gospel According to Luke Through Year C</td>
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<td>7-8</td>
<td>Narrative Lectionary Workdays—Christmas Through Spring 2016: The Gospel of Mark</td>
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<td>Webcast: Films and Faith—Exploring Christianity Through Visual Media</td>
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<td>26-30</td>
<td>Intentional Interim Ministry</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Webcast: Working Preacher Lectionary Study—Advent Through Epiphany</td>
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<td>Webcast: Films and Faith—Exploring Christianity Through Visual Media</td>
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<td>10-11</td>
<td>Everyday People: Reclaiming Vocation as Faithful Resistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-Dec. 2</td>
<td>School for Lay Ministry</td>
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**Center for Lifelong Learning**

651-641-3416  
kairos@luthersem.edu
Share Luther Seminary with a

FUTURE CHURCH LEADER

For M.Div. student Kristofer Coffman, multiple paths in his life led him to seminary. By completing his degree at Luther Seminary, he honors a family legacy while pursuing his passion for rural ministry. Here, he will get the hands-on experience and classroom training that will help him be a true leader in the church.

Do you know someone looking to further their unique gifts for ministry? Tell them how they can nurture their hearts and minds at Luther Seminary in order to proclaim God’s love in new and exciting ways.

Dokimazo

Spread the word | Oct. 11-12

Do you know a future church leader with gifts for ministry? Tell them about Dokimazo, a chance for those interested in Luther Seminary to join us on campus and learn more!

Dokimazo is a Greek word meaning “to test, to discern, to approve.” It’s our way of saying: “Come and see what God has in store for you.”

This two-day event will be held Sunday evening through Monday afternoon.

Prospective students will have the opportunity to:
- Hear others’ stories.
- Visit local churches and explore the Twin Cities community.
- Reflect on their own story and God’s call in their life.
- Learn more about Luther Seminary.
- Engage with faculty and current students.

RSVP online at www.luthersem.edu/dokimazo.
Taylor Skoglund is a second-generation Luther Seminary student. When she was a young child, her mother attended here. Years later, when it was time for Skoglund to pursue her call to ministry, she explored Luther again. After visiting, she knew she was home.

“It’s just such an incredible community. Everyone is so supportive,” says Taylor, adding that her statement includes everyone on campus—students, faculty and staff.

“Because of the community I’ve met, I’ve started climbing. I’ve become a sacristan and met so many people. I’ve learned that I want to work in a hospital and speak Spanish. I’ve experienced so much more of the city than I thought I would,” Taylor says. “I owe it all to the friends that I’ve met at Luther.

Do you know someone with gifts for ministry? Help them find their place at Luther Seminary. Tell them to schedule a visit today!

www.luthersem.edu/visit
## Events Calendar

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<tr>
<td>The Robert William Ruotsalainen Rutlen and Elizabeth Jane Runn Rutlen Lecture on Faith and Creation</td>
<td>April 21-22</td>
<td>Luther Seminary</td>
<td>Central Lutheran Church, Minneapolis</td>
<td><a href="http://www.luthersem.edu/lectures/faithandcreation">www.luthersem.edu/lectures/faithandcreation</a></td>
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### 23rd Annual Festival of Homiletics

**Preaching from the Mountain: Heralds of Good Tidings**

**May 11-15 | Denver**

The Festival was praised by the New York Times as the "center of the stars of the preaching world." (New York Times, June 6, 2014)


[www.festivalofhomiletics.com](http://www.festivalofhomiletics.com)
Alum News

’10s
Leslie Mahraun, ’12, was called to Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii.

Christian Boyd, ’10, was installed as the stated clerk, chief ecclesiastical administrator, of the Presbytery of Milwaukee (PCUSA) in February.

’00s
Rebecca Miller, ’07, is now a blogger for the evangelical channel of Patheos.com.

’90s
Gissela Varinia Espinosa (Blanco), ’99, accepted a call to be associate pastor at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in Springfield, Va., on Nov. 2. She was installed on Dec. 10.

Scott Yakimow, ’99, completed his Ph.D. from the University of Virginia and is now an associate professor of theology at Concordia University-Portland.

Shauna Hannan, ’98, joined the faculty of California Lutheran University.

Cordell Strug, ’82, published a meditation on pacifism and patriotism titled “The Other Cheek: gospel, empire and memory in one Christian’s journey.” It focuses on Memorial Day weekend in a small parish during the Iraq war.

’80s
Michele Venable, ’87, died after a brief battle with cancer on Nov. 8. She served as pastor of Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mt. Vernon, S.D., and director of social services for Jubilee Center of Broward Inc.

Jeff Laeger-Hagemeister, ’86, chaplain at St. John’s Lutheran Community in Albert Lea, Minn., died on Oct. 3 from cancer.


For more alumni news, visit www.luthersem.edu/alums

RETHINKING CONFIRMATION

Join with concerned ministry leaders to assess the current state of confirmation and imagine fresh possibilities. Special attention will be given to signs of life and inspiring stories of faithful and effective innovation in youth discipleship.

The event provides a unique opportunity to discover, engage and interpret early findings from The Confirmation Project, a major research partnership between five denominations.

Signs of Life in Times of Change

July 29-31
St. Paul, Minn.

www.luthersem.edu/rethinking
Faculty and Staff Notes

Terence Fretheim, ’60, emeritus professor of Old Testament, was a guest of the Asian Theological Seminary in Manila, Philippines, where he gave a presentation about “The Messiness of God’s Creation” and “The Suffering of God in the Prophets.” He also presented a paper titled “The Bible, God and Natural Disasters” at the 2015 ATS Theological Forum, “Why, O God...?” Disaster, Resiliency and the People of God.

Mark Granquist, associate pastor of church history, is the editor of the Journal of the Lutheran Historical Conference, which is published annually. Volume 2 was published in fall 2014, with Volume 3 to follow in late winter 2015.

Lee Griffin, a former lecturer in pastoral care, died Oct. 21 at the age of 85. He is survived by his wife, five children, eight grandchildren and one great granddaughter.

Mary Jane Haemig, professor of church history and director of the Thrivent Reformation Research Program, taught “Women of the Reformation” at Sunday morning adult forums at Abiding Savior Lutheran Church in Mounds View, Minn., and at United Lutheran Church in Red Wing, Minn. She also spoke at the Perspectives on the Reformation seminar at King of Kings Lutheran Church in Mountain Lakes, N.J.

Mary Hess, professor of educational leadership and chair of the leadership division, gave a number of lectures over the last six months. Among these were “Create, Share, Believe: Public Spaces, Digital Storytelling and Religious Education,” to the International Society of Media Religion and Culture in Canterbury, England; and “Learning in the Midst of Media, Religion and Culture” to a Lilly Endowment consultation on digital/web communication in Raleigh, N.C. She published “Learning With Digital Technologies: Privileging Persons Over Machines” in the Journal of Moral Theology (Vol. 1, No. 4, Winter 2015). She led a two-day retreat for the national meeting of the North American Pacific Capuchin Conference (Capuchin Franciscan) Formators, titled “Lectio, Visio, and Audio Divina: The Landscape Inhabited by Young Adults and Implications for Learning and Formation.”

Karoline Lewis, ’94, associate professor of biblical preaching and the Alvin N. Rogness Chair of Homiletics, led a six-week series on discipleship in the Gospel of John at Mount Olivet Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. She led an adult forum at Mount Carmel Lutheran Church in Minneapolis about the Gospel of Matthew. She preached at the women’s retreat at Mount Carmel Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, Wis. She preached and taught at Bethany Lutheran Church in Denver. She taught a course on the Gospel of John for Luther Seminary’s Lay School of Theology.

Lois Malcolm, ’89, professor of systematic theology, presented “Holy Spirit” and “Trinity and Feminism” to the Women and Justice Task Force at the ELCA headquarters in Chicago; and “Where is the Holy Spirit in All This?” for the 2015 Mid-Winter Convocation at Luther Seminary. She published an essay titled “The Generative Grammar of the Holy Spirit” for the Lutheran Quarterly (Vol. 28, No. 4). She contributed an entry about the Holy Spirit to the “Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions” (Baker Academic, forthcoming).

Amy Marga, associate professor of systematic theology, presented a paper at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in San Diego titled “The Redeeming Act of Giving Birth: Martin Luther’s Theology Concerning the Bodies of Mothers.” She led an adult forum at St. Michael’s Lutheran Church in Roseville, Minn., titled “Paths to Theology.” She was a guest lecturer on the theology of Karl Barth for three sessions at the University of St. Thomas’ senior theology seminar. She presented a paper at the Regional Upper Midwest American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature titled “The Virgin Mary and Mothers of the Oppressed.” She contributed a chapter titled “Thinking Systematically” to the book, “Thinking Theologically,” edited by Eric Barreto (Fortress, 2015).

Alan Padgett, professor of systematic theology, gave a keynote address at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in Apple Valley, Minn., titled “Science and Scripture: Caring for Creation.”

Andrew Root, associate professor and Carrie Olson Baalson Chair of Youth and Family Ministry, gave multiple presentations in the last six months. Three of these were for the theological conference for the ELCA Pacifica Synod in Palm Springs, Calif. He presented a lecture titled “Identity and Faith” at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, where he also preached at the installation of David Lose as president. He wrote the cover story, titled “Why Your Millennial Needs a Bit of Bonhoeffer,” for the January/February edition of Christianity Today.

Matthew Skinner, associate professor of New Testament, was a co-contributor (with Eric Barreto, Rolf Jacobson, Dirk Lange and Karoline Lewis) to a Bible study exploring youth homelessness as part of the “From Here On” program produced by Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota. He taught an adult education series titled “Where Did Our Bible Come From?” at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in Apple Valley, Minn. He preached and taught about “Images of Christian Community and Vitality in the Acts of the Apostles” at the South Dakota Synod (ELCA) Rostered Leaders’ Retreat in Watertown, S.D.

Dwight Zscheile, ’08, associate professor of congregational mission and leadership, delivered the St. Andrew’s Lecture at St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church in Pittsburgh, Penn. He led a leadership retreat and preached at Christ Church Cathedral in Indianapolis. He led the clergy retreat for the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta in February, was keynote speaker for the Episcopal Diocese of East Tennessee convention and delivered the Brennan Lectures at the Episcopal Diocese of Kentucky.

FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

Mark Granquist published “Lutherans in America: A New History” (Augsburg Fortress, 2015). It is the first large-scale history of Lutherans in America in 40 years. At the publication of this issue, “Lutherans in America” was in the top 20 list of best sellers in its category on Amazon Books.

COMING SOON

Amy Marga will present a paper titled “The Hidden Presence of the Sacred: The Invisibility of Motherwork in the Judeo-Christian Tradition” on May 1 at the annual Museum of Motherhood Conference in New York City.

Do you want to invite a faculty or staff member to present in your congregation? Visit www.luthersem.edu/resourceguide for up-to-date topic listings and contact information.
Faculty and Staff Notes

Matthew Skinner will teach an adult-education class titled “Everything You Need to Know about Jesus in 45 Minutes” at Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Maple Grove, Minn., on May 3. From May 31-June 1, he will give the Eberts Lectures at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Akron, Ohio.

Dwight Zscheile will be the keynote speaker for the Academy of Religious Leadership’s annual meeting in April.

Karoline Lewis will preach and emcee the Festival of Homiletics in Denver, May 11-15. On May 16 she will preach at Luther Seminary’s Baccalaureate service. From May 20-21, she will lead the Lay Preaching Convocation on preaching the Gospel of John at the Lutheran School of Theology in St. Louis, Mo. She will also travel in May as part of directing Luther Seminary’s grant with the Lilly Foundation titled “Strengthening Christian Preaching Initiative.”

Booming ministry, continued from 11

“The negative [we are seeing] in the church is crime following the money flow. Human trafficking has become a pretty big issue here,” Roise says. “Also, we’ve never had an issue with homeless men. Now we have a homeless shelter. If it was here [before the boom], it was very subtle for the churches. Now it’s front and center.”

“Our county has a 1 percent unemployment rate,” Loven says, explaining why a seemingly positive statistic is also taxing the community. “There’s a humongous amount of teachers, doctors and nurses needed. An elementary school had been closed, but now reopened and portable classes have been added. They need more spaces. They just approved a new high school. It’s going to be in need [of teachers] in a few years.”

“The other piece that you can’t underestimate is the deep sense of grief for many of our people who’ve lived here a long time,” Anderson says. “They love the rural lifestyle. The change happened so quickly and they weren’t prepared for it. There is deep grieving going on. Churches have to tend to the grief, but at the same time, offer deep hospitality to the stranger. We have some congregations that are responding to their communities in meaningful ways. We’ve seen congregations figure that out and follow Christ outside into the community.”

Those in ministry aren’t exempt from the stresses of a changing landscape. Loven has done things in ministry he never imagined during seminary. He’s done funerals for murders and suicides, and dealt with stewardship issues. “It’s been great to have a broad experience, but it’s been pretty taxing,” Loven says. “It makes you realize that you need to have good boundaries to take time away. There’s a little town 35 miles away as you head out of town. It’s in the oil patch, but every time I get there, I feel a weight come off my shoulders. You don’t realize the stress you’re under just being under that environment. There’s a compounding effect. I’ve got all of that past experience built up, and it makes me aware of going to Minot, and just getting a relief.”

A sense of gratitude

Through all the ups and downs, positives and negatives of the oil boom, the prevailing feeling among those ministering in western North Dakota is hope.

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“We have congregations that almost closed doors, but now, they have money from mineral rights,” Anderson says. “We can’t rely on that because oil prices might drop. How do we help people look at that as money for mission? Our challenge is that we want to rely on the stewardship from members rather than the money from oil.”

“I think it’s about being out in the community,” Paulson says. “It’s a ministry of presence. We’re out meeting people, offering hope, those kinds of opportunities.”

As Anderson notes, her synod has become a popular choice for people to request. “People have wanted to come out here. This is the place to be to experiment in ministry. We have churches willing to try new things for the sake of God’s mission.”
Every two years, the graduates of the Luther Seminary class of 1969 reunite. Over four days, they learn from one another, worship together and share their lives with each other. Then they leave something behind for those following in their footsteps. Since 2009, when their reunions began, the classmates take up a donation. In five years, at their 50th reunion, they will have amassed enough to endow a scholarship for current seminarians. Here are just a few of those committed to leaving a legacy for future leaders.

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“We paid very little tuition then, besides room and board. Around $200. It’s no longer that way. That is really motivational for me.”

—Lyndy West

“At our first reunion, many of us had not seen one another in 35 years. Because of our seminary friendships, we picked up where we left off. The sense of humor that comes out of us when we’re away from the parish is fantastic.”

—Will Olsen

“We're working together on this because we need new people to come behind us. The challenges of the church are different now. We need new leadership and they need seminary training.”

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