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Living Out Our Callings At Home
pages 2-5

First Quarter 2004
Vol.20, No.1

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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Luther Seminary, the largest of the eight seminaries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada and the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. It is a part of the ELCA’s Western Mission Cluster, along with Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary.

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LUTHER SEMINARY
2481 Como Avenue • St. Paul, MN 55108
I am an auntie. It is a position I take very seriously—even when I pretend to be a horse with my niece clinging to my back, or when I make silly faces at my baby nephew, hoping for a smile. I once heard that children have a better chance of growing up happy and well-adjusted when there are adults in their lives, other than their parents, who serve as mentors, role models and nurturers. I want to be that kind of person for Elizabeth and Nathaniel. So, my ears really perk up when Dr. James Nestingen, one of this year’s Mid-Winter Convocation plenary speakers, talked of the “particularly important function” of the aunt or uncle in a family. “They are close enough to parents to know firsthand both their gifts and their limits; close enough to children to share in their development without having to assume all the parental responsibilities.” I laughed along with the rest of the Convo participants.

But it seems “family” cannot be defined in general terms anymore, and neither can “home.” In the ebb and flow of today’s fast-paced, mobile, many-shades-of-gray society, families can be “intact,” “fractured,” “blended” or anything in between. People are living longer, remaining single longer, moving more often, raising more children outside of the offices of marriage… the list goes on. Does Luther’s vision of home and family as vocation still apply? More than ever, was the answer, as Mid-Winter Convocation 2004 set about to examine what home means today, and, more importantly, what God intends our roles to be in the midst of family and community.


Nestingen, professor of church history at Luther Seminary, reminded the participants that Martin Luther considered one’s role in the home—through marriage and the extended family—as one of the primary vocations to which believers are called. But more than ever, the answer, as Mid-Winter Convocation 2004 set about to examine what home means today, and, more importantly, what God intends our roles to be in the midst of family and community.

Nestingen laid the foundation with the opening lecture “Justification, Vocation, and Location in Luther’s Reformation.” He took participants back to Luther’s time, when feudalism and its barter system gave way to capitalism and the use of cash. This meant many longtime serfs were evicted from their ancestral home-steads. In a time when one’s identity was tied with the land, cities began to burgeon with those who no longer knew where home was, nor their role in society. To these people, Luther “sought to analyze accurately, truthfully, the actual points or stations in human life—the down-to-earth relationships—in which the Creator calls the creature into cooperative enterprise for the care of creation,” Nestingen said. “[Luther’s] doctrines of justification and vocation shaped a witness that spoke to the urban migrants in the midst of their dislocation, providing a deep sense of identity in their new context… Released from the heaven-storming, hopeless pursuit of a self-transcending wisdom, the faithful get the creation back again, with its limits as well as its joys.”

Nestingen went on to describe four areas of calling Luther upheld that shape vocations of everyday life: family, work, community and church. Later in his lecture “Households as Masks of God: Going Home in Repentance and Faith,” Nestingen painted a portrait of Luther’s own marriage and family life. One of Luther’s most important statements, said Nestingen, was from his 1531 sermon “Concerning Married Life,” where he declared that husband and wife become God’s face to one another. “In the give and take, the sharing and the challenges, the self-giving and the hostilities, husband and wife literally share with God in one another’s creation, shaping one another’s lives. They are inextricably bound together.”

From marriage and “through a combination of offices, as Luther understands it, the family lays the foundation for the community,” said Nestingen. But, “when two become three or four, or more, the potential for conflict multiplies exponentially,” he continued.

Nestingen examined the modern-day family—also experiencing dislocation, as in Luther’s time—but from a social rather than economic perspective. “Where do we find footings for the vocations of marriage and the family when the ground is shifting underneath us? How specifically do we begin to address those closest to us, our own families and congregations, as they are being dislocated?” he queried.

Garrison Keillor was the surprise guest of the Mid-Winter Convocation concert given by singer-songwriter Lynn Peterson and pianist Rich Dworsky. Dworsky is the leader of Guy’s All-Star Shoe Band on A Prairie Home Companion, Peterson is a frequent guest on the show.
Garland talked about how the church is captured by a culture that names families by their parts—or lack thereof. “If anything has been cut off, then we are labeled by what is no longer there. We are a single-parent family, a divorced family, a step-family, a widow, a single adult.

“Marriage is a good thing. But the good news of Jesus is that we don’t have to be married or parents to be part of families,” she continued. “In fact, it is families created anew from brokenness that are the best pictures of God’s good news.”

In her second lecture, Garland discussed how congregations need to become nurturing communities for their members. “If a congregation is truly a community of faith, then it is a place where people and families know one another not just by name, but also by their stories.”

“It is clear that…congregations are addressing the needs of many families who express the belief that they are stronger, more resilient in the face of crisis and more faithful in their life together because they are a part of a congregation,” Garland said. But there is more a congregation can do to nurture a family’s faith, she added, in particular:

1. **Look for family relationships beyond the “of course” family**
   - Make sure families outside of the traditional “married couples and their children” are ministered to.

2. **Look for the strengths of all families**
   - In her many interviews with families about their identity and faith, Garland discovered treasure troves of stories of faith and resilience in seemingly dysfunctional families that “defined themselves differently, accentuating their strengths, underscoring for themselves their own resources for tackling the challenges that confront them. The task for the congregation, then, is to find ways to identify the strength of all families—even when they have had troubles or have been troubling.”

3. **Encourage families to develop their own faith practices**

4. **Provide ways for families to learn and serve together at church**

5. **Provide ways for families to minister together**

6. **Provide ways that families can eat together, or simply be together**

7. **Be a place that evokes and listens to family stories of faith**

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President David L. Tiede’s Mid-Winter Convocation Speech

The 2004 Mid-Winter Convocation is the first in a series of convocations on living out our callings. We began this year with living out our callings at home. We explored what it means to live out our faith in our homes and how our congregations can support and nurture the wide variety of homes that make up our congregations.

As Lutherans, we believe that we are all called to Christian service in all arenas of our lives—in our homes, in our workplaces, in our communities and congregations. Martin Luther said that all the tasks of one’s life—no matter how menial and mundane the tasks performed—provide an opportunity to express one’s faith. In a sermon in 1534, he wrote: “If you are father or mother, believe in Jesus Christ and so you will be a holy father or mother.”

We are thankful that this work has already begun in over 30 congregations across the country. I’d like to take a few minutes to share the excitement that pastors and lay leaders in these congregations have for Centered Life—in their own words.

At Luther Seminary, it is our mission to educate leaders for Christian communities; leaders who are called and sent by the Holy Spirit to witness to salvation through Jesus Christ and to serve in God’s world.

I want to tell you about a major new initiative of the seminary—Centered Life. The seminary’s mission is to serve congregations, and through Centered Life the seminary is becoming more visibly active to thousands of people in congregations throughout the U.S. Centered Life exists to help congregations become places where people are encouraged and supported to live faithfully in God’s world—to connect Sunday to Monday.

We believe that congregations are the best places for people to develop a sense of calling about the roles they play everyday: as parent, child, worker, student, neighbor, community leader or volunteer. And congregations can be places where people can learn that God has uniquely gifted them and chosen them for a purpose and a mission right where God has placed them.

We are thankful that this work has already begun in over 30 congregations across the country. I’d like to take a few minutes to share the excitement that pastors and lay leaders in these congregations have for Centered Life—in their own words.

“Centered Life is what we want to be about at Good Shepherd. [It] helps bridge the disconnect between Sunday and Monday, between the waters of baptism and walking wet into everyday life, between hearing the word and living the word. Centered Life further empowers us to share the Shepherd’s love… at home, in the community, in the world beyond. It is a blessing.”

“Although our congregation has worked long and hard on ministry in daily life, we were never able to test how much it was really a part of the lives of our members. Was it possibly a mile wide and only an inch deep? The Centered Life initiative was just what we needed. Through the assessment process we learned where our strengths are and where we need to focus our attention on soft spots.”

“Your initiative is exciting. It is exciting because it is grounded in the truth that God deeply desires each believer to live out his/her vocation in this world in order to make a wonderful and life-giving experience. It is exciting because your staff is passionate about this truth, and passionate about the people of our congregations… This initiative has staying-power since it flows out of and into every aspect of life which reflects the message of the cross—Jesus with us in all things.”

“Centered Life encourages church members to let Christianity become a part of everything they do. Our Christian faith is not just another category of obligations; it is a way of life. We need to help everyone realize that they are an important part of God’s plan, and then equip them with the skills to fulfill their mission on earth.”

Centered Life is proving to be a vital tool for these congregations—an architecture for sustainable change as they approach their mission and ministry in the world. We are most fortunate to have the support of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, both financially and missionally, in this endeavor.
First Lutheran Carries Out the Great Commission
Minot church gets ready to support eight seminarians

By Nancy Giguere,
special correspondent

Pastor Todd Hylden, ’94, of First Lutheran Church in Minot, North Dakota, likes to compare his church to an old-fashioned thrashing crew working to bring in the harvest with hopeful urgency and a spirit of comradeship. “We are working together in that same spirit to bring in the precious harvest of souls to the love of Jesus Christ,” he says.

So strong is that spirit in the 2,000-member congregation, the First Lutheran “threshing crew” created a special fund to enhance its mission outreach, repair the church and support eight potential seminarians from the congregation.

A love for the seminary
First Lutheran’s close relationship with Luther began with former Pastor T. F. Gullixson, who after leading the congregation from 1912 to 1930, went on to serve as seminary director of discipleship, and support for global mission.

To meet these needs, the congregation created the Yarger Mission Fund. “The purpose of this campaign was to enhance our participation in the Great Commission,” Hylden says. “We named it after Lee and his wife Jan in honor of their passion for mission and the gracious energy they have brought to the congregation.”

A brand-new call
At first Yarger was opposed to having the fund named after him, but eventually he agreed.

In an unusual arrangement, Hylden asked Yarger to stay on at First Lutheran as an unpaid campaign consultant.

“A new vision happened to me on the way to retirement,” Yarger wrote in the campaign booklet. “Suddenly, I found myself at the heart of a mission emphasis, the like of which I had not seen in 35 years of ordained ministry. It is an exciting adventure that I simply must complete. It is a call.”

The campaign raised almost $400,000 during the fall of 2003. Yarger is quick to credit Hylden as well as co-chairs Bruce and Jenny Nelson for its success. He also praises the generosity of First Lutheran’s members: “This is a wonderful congregation, and the mission fund is their calling,” he says.

A vitally needed mission
Although the money will be used to meet variety of needs, the heart of the Yarger Fund is support for the seminary. “This support not only connects us to the mission of our past, it is vitally needed now and in the future,” Yarger says.

The pastors have introduced all eight candidates to the congregation. “I put them in the pulpit and ask them to talk about themselves, their faith and their call. I might ask them about their core beliefs or what today’s gospel text means to them,” Yarger says. “We want the congregation to see them, call them by name, pray for them and know what’s happening with them.”

Strategic Plan Update:
Center for Lifelong Learning Finds Innovative Ways to Equip Congregations for Ministry

Luther Seminary wants to help congregations assist members in discovering their callings and gifts in order to live faithfully in their daily lives.

This is one of the goals outlined in Luther’s 2000-2005 strategic plan, “Serving the Promise of Our Mission.” The Center for Lifelong Learning was charged with the task of helping create vital missional congregations “who set free the baptized for their life (for more information about Centered Life, see president’s article on pages 6-7).

The Centered Life Assessment: An assessment tool based on five years of research with focus groups of lay and clergy in six congregations, was developed through a partnership with the Wilder Research Center, St. Paul, Minn. It is the starting point for Centered Life congregations and helps determine members’ perspectives on their congregation’s efforts to equip them for ministry in daily life.

The Centered Life Web site: www.centeredlife.org was launched Jan. 7, 2004. The site offers information, inspiration and resources to congregations and individuals (see page 19 for more information about the Centered Life Web site). In September, Centered Life will launch a private site specifically for Centered Life congregations. This will allow them to share ideas, take online courses and use online tools.

Dependable Strengths Workshops: The strategic plan for the Centered Life initiative incorporates courses developed and regularly offered through continuing education for Centered Life congregations and leaders. One of the first courses of this sort is the Dependable Strengths workshop, which teaches leaders in congregations how to help members uncover their strengths and grow in their areas of excellence as a way of unleashing God’s call in their lives.

Luther Productions: Luther Productions came under the umbrella of the Center for Lifelong Learning in the summer of 2002. Its mission is to share the wisdom and knowledge of Luther Seminary faculty with the larger church by creating multimedia tools for pastors, congregations and laity. An editorial committee of pastors, lay leaders, faculty and staff meets regularly with Luther Productions to develop ideas. Luther Productions has also begun to take advantage of Luther Seminary’s Lay School of Theology’s online courses, creating faculty presentations to produce short audio courses on CD.

Fisher’s Net: The Fisher’s Net is an e-learning service provider that delivers theological education courses and resources to learners worldwide—including Luther’s academic online courses.

Now, the Center for Lifelong Learning is working with Fisher’s Net to develop and distribute two online courses: “What’s God Up To?” designed by Emily Hegener Rova, ’99, and developed by a committee of the Western Mission Cluster; and “Living Out Our Calling,” a course developed from a Lay School of Theology class taught by Jack Fortin. Both of these courses are now housed on the Centered Life Web site, www.centeredlife.org.


First Lutheran (continued)

“I’m not doing this on my own”

Patrick McCormack, one of the eight, is currently in his second year at Luther. As a mid-life career changer with a daughter in college, McCormack has appreciated First Lutheran’s support.

“The congregation’s support lets me know that I’m not doing this on my own. It makes me feel that God is really calling me,” he says. “It’s also comforting to know that people are praying for me. And the financial support has taken a lot of the pressure off our family.”

Two other candidates are currently taking seminary classes from Luther Seminary over the Internet. Another is a senior in college. The remaining four are contemplating a mid-life career change.

Igniting the congregation

At least two of the candidates plan to return to the Western North Dakota Synod once they’ve completed their studies. That’s good news for the people of First Lutheran who care very much about the future of the church in the region. “But even those who don’t come back will serve the greater church, and that’s part of our mission, too,” Yarger says.

Best of all, the presence of so many potential seminarians who are excited about their faith has “ignited the congregation.” And that alone, Yarger says, is “sufficient motivation for the parish to support their seminary education.”


Luther Seminary Receives Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Foundation Grant for Student-Oriented Activities

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Foundation has awarded Luther Seminary a $72,000 grant for student-oriented activities. The grant will be dispersed during spring semester 2003-2004 and fall semester 2004-2005. Monies will come from four funds:

Thrivent Leadership Fund

will allow students to participate in off-campus conferences, workshops and other programs that compliment the academic program at Luther Seminary. The emphasis is on training in leadership skills for ministry.

Thrivent Enrichment Series

will subsidize events that enrich seminary life and enliven co-curricular offerings. A portion will be dedicated to funding service learning experiences, such as the Day of Service during First Week.

Financial Planning for the Future

will fund a fall 2004 workshop for seniors to help with the preparation of budgets, debt management and charitable giving. Each participant will have time for a one-on-one consultation with a financial planner or an attorney.

Thrivent Memento

will provide a permanent memento for each student enrolled in at least two credit hours (per semester).


were the noncanonical gospels suppressed because they show Jesus as more human than divine? the truth is that many of these texts present Jesus as much more than an ordinary human being. on the other hand, “jesus looks very human in the gospels of matthew, mark, and luke,” skinner notes.


Cracking The Da Vinci Code

When Matthew Skinner read The Da Vinci Code, he found the plot of Dan Brown’s best-selling novel “contrived” and the characters “flat.” But as a scholar, he found the book “exciting—and frustrating.”

“It’s frustrating because the author plays fast and loose with history. But the book does serve as a vehicle to bring issues of faith into a public venue. In particular, it causes readers to ask, ‘Who is Jesus?’” says Skinner, who is assistant professor of New Testament at Luther.

Last January, when Skinner was invited by Edina Community Lutheran Church to explore some of the questions raised by the novel, organizers expected about 50 people to attend the event. Instead a standing-room-only crowd of over 300 people showed up to learn more about such issues as these:

- Was Jesus married to Mary Magdalene?
- Did the Emperor Constantine “rig” the selection of gospel texts to reinforce the view that Jesus was God?
- What happened, but Skinner believes that “to attribute this to a concentrated political power. Scholars dispute what happened, but Skinner believes that “to attribute this to a concentrated effort is simply too reductionist.”

This spring Skinner will offer “The New Testament and The Da Vinci Code: Exploring Questions about Faith, Fiction, and Early Christian Texts” in Luther’s Lay School of Theology. “I’m not trying to refute the book—it’s a work of fiction, after all. But the issues it raises are important for our faith, and people want to think deeply about them,” he says.


The Da Vinci Code by Dan Brown is causing a lot of discussion about its characters’ claims regarding the formation of the New Testament and early Christian beliefs. Luther Seminary invites people to separate the issues it raises are important for early Christian texts and movements, and women’s roles in first century churches.

The class will be held on three consecutive Mondays, April 19, April 26 and May 3, from 7-9 p.m. For more information call 651-641-3416, e-mail kairo@luthersem.edu or visit www.luthersem.edu/lifelong_learning.

Unable to attend the class? Consider purchasing Luther Productions’ audio CD “Decoding the Da Vinci Code.” See page 19 for more information.
Charles Amjad-Ali, Martin Luther King, Jr., Professor of Justice and Christian Community, gave the Scherer Lecture at the Chicago Center for Global Ministries on “Clash of Civilization Revisited: The Future of Christian-Muslim Relations” in February. He also preached in chapel at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. He was a keynote speaker at The Society for the Advancement of Continuing Education for Ministry (SACEM) conference on “Listening to Many Voices: Lifelong Learning in a Global Context” in Denver. He is one of five senior editors for the Dictionary of South Asian Christianity, which is being compiled for publication in 2005.

Jack Fortin, ’71, director of Lifelong Learning, spoke at the Embracing the Future conference in Urbana, Ill., Dec. 31. He preached at Augsburg Fortress, spring 2004), a handbook for sharing the Word Out: The Alman’s Guide to Church Communications (The Alman Institute, 2003). From parish newsletters to media relations and special events, he provides myriad practical pointers and backs them up with interesting case studies.

Alvin Luedke, associate professor of rural ministry, helped lead the Luther Seminary Rural Ministry course in Cooperstown, N.D., in January. In February, he made a presentation on “Stewardship Leadership in a Rural Setting” at the senior stewardship seminar at Luther Seminary. In March, he attended the Rural Ministry Conference at Warburg Seminary and spoke at a gathering celebrating rural ministry in the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin.


Walter Sundberg, professor of church history, led a three-part presentation on The Devil: Historical, Biblical and Contemporary Understandings for the Church Today at a one-day conference at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Brainerd, Minn., in January. 

Coming to a Town Near You

Charles Amjad-Ali, Martin Luther King, Jr., Professor of Justice and Christian Community, will gather with other international labor leaders at the University of Amsterdam for a consultation on “Religion and Labor” March 21-23.

Richard Bliese, academic dean and associate professor of missions, will lead a workshop entitled “Mission’s Most Illusive Message: Reconciliation” at the Annual Lutheran Mission Conference at Luther Seminary Mar. 27. He will present on “The Congregation and Mission as Mission Centers” at the Coalition for Ministry in Daily Life gathering at Luther Seminary Apr. 16-18. He will be speaking on evangelism and mission at the Central States Synod Assembly April 22-25, the St. Paul/Minneapolis Synod Assembly June 4, and the Oregon Synod Assembly June 5-6.

Jack Fortin, ’71, director of Lifelong Learning, will speak at the Whitworth Institute of Ministry in Spokane, Wash., July 12-16.

Kerry Fryer, instructor of congregational leadership, is the editor of Sharing the Story: Engaging Evangelism (Augsburg Fortress, spring 2004), a handbook for congregational leaders that encompasses the ELCA’s new Evangelism Strategy.


Lois Malcolm, ’89, associate professor of systematic theology, will give a theological response to the events of 9/11 as one of the presenters at the 19th Jewish Christian Seminar, April 15, at Luther Seminary.

Fred Gaiser, professor of Old Testament, will also present at the seminar. Malcolm will be a participant in the consultation on “What Makes the Church One?” at the Center of Theological Inquiry, Princeton, N.J. April 19-21. She will be at Notre Dame University to present a paper on “Unity, Mission and Evangelism” at the Conference on the Unity of the Church May 30-June 1.

Visit www.luthersem.edu/ the Church May 30-June 1.

Faculty & Staff Notes (continued)

help lead the Transformational Ministry Event put on by the ELCA’s Division for Outreach May 19-23.

Alvin Luedke, associate professor of rural ministry, will attend the Rural Church Network meeting in Washington, D.C. April 15-17, and the AMERC Board of Directors meeting April 23-24.

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Visit www.luthersem.edu/ faculty/fac_presentations.asp for more Luther faculty speaking engagements.

Koester, Skinner Provide Study Guides for Passion and Da Vinci Code


Nomination Form: Faithfulness in Ministry Cross

I nominate the following alum of Luther Seminary or an antecedent seminary as a candidate for the Faithfulness in Ministry Cross to be presented by Luther Seminary to clergy and/or lay graduates on behalf of the Alumni Council.

My nomination is in the category of: 

☐ Parish Ministry: Urban/Suburban
☐ Parish Ministry: Rural/Small Town
☐ Specialized Ministry (including education)

Name

Street address: city/town state zip

Phone: e-mail

Name

Street address: city/town state zip

Phone: e-mail

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Street address: city/town state zip

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Street address: city/town state zip

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Completed nomination forms for the Faithfulness in Ministry Cross must be received on or before May 28, 2004. Mail completed nomination form to: Seminary Relations Luther Seminary 2481 Como Ave. St. Paul, MN 55108

This year’s Faithfulness in Ministry honorees, from left: Bruce Williams, ’67, small town/rural ministry; Ed Nesseland, ’71, specialized ministry; and Rodney Anderson, ’74, urban/suburban ministry.
Global mission used to mean taking the gospel to other parts of the world. “But now the world has come to North America,” says Richard Bliese, Luther’s academic dean and associate professor of mission. He points out that, for example, that Minneapolis and St. Paul are now home to immigrants from South East Asia, Africa and Latin America. And while many are Christian, many are not.

In this multi-ethnic, multi-religious context, “the church needs leaders who are capable, ready, and able to cross cultural and religious boundaries with the gospel,” Bliese says.

To meet this need, Luther has created the M.A. in Mission and World Christianity. The program includes courses in Bible, the history of Christianity, theology, and confessional writings, as well as world religions, world Christianity, and global mission. All students will participate in an overseas experience outside North America or Western Europe.

According to Frieder Ludwig, associate professor of mission and world Christianity, students will learn to “understand Christianity in different contexts, churches acting in a different context, and theologies developing in a different context.”

This understanding will help them connect with global stories and proclaim the Christian faith in a way that is open to non-Christians. “It is important to proclaim the gospel,” Ludwig says. “But we must also be able to listen and find ways to live together peacefully.”

Jon R. Lee Named 2004 Alum in Residence

Pastor Jon R. Lee, ’66, visited Luther Seminary as this year’s Alum in Residence, March 8-12. During his stay, Lee preached in chapel, met students and faculty and participated in a number of selected classes.

Lee is senior pastor of King of Glory Lutheran Church in Dallas. During his 32 years of service the congregation’s membership has grown from 400 to more than 2,000 and it has become a regional church with a ministry to the city and its northern suburbs. In addition to leading the congregation, Lee serves on the board of directors at Texas Lutheran College, Dallas Area Community of Churches and the ELCA Board of Pensions. He is a mentor and coach to a number of pastors.

The Alum in Residence program invites alums to share their experiences, insights and expertise with students and discuss the kinds of seminary experiences that were most helpful to them in their work. The program is sponsored by the Luther Seminary Alumni/ae Council.

The ‘00s

Allison Nahm, ’01, and Andrea Nahm celebrated the birth of their daughter in September. Allison serves as director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries at Lewisville Presbyterian Church in McLean, Va.

Stephan K. Turnbull, ’01, won the fourth annual World & World essay prize for doctoral candidates. He is a doctoral candidate in New Testament at the Duke University graduate program in religion. His essay, “Grace and Gift in Luther and Paul,” will appear in the journal’s Summer 2004 issue. In his essay, he enters an ongoing discussion about Martin Luther’s interpretation of the theology of St. Paul, especially in the Letter to the Romans. The essay by Turnbull emerged as the favorite of the judges from a large group of entries submitted by doctoral candidates in religion and theology from major seminaries and universities across the nation.

Evelyn Weston, ’02, (MA 1991; MDIV 2002), was called in January to serve as pastor at the Sveadahl Lutheran Parish (East Sveadahl and West Sveadahl Lutheran Churches) in rural St. James, Minn.

Lynette Crase, ’03, was ordained Dec. 6, 2003. She began her call as associate pastor at Joy Lutheran Church in Parker, Colo. on Dec. 1. J.J. Dygert, ’03, serves the three congregations of the Northern Light Parish in northeastern North Dakota. He was ordained on July 13 in Bothell, Wash., and began his call on Aug. 1.

Kyle Fever, ’03, will complete his first year in the New Testament/Early Christianity doctorate program at Loyola University, Chicago. He and his wife, Laura, live in Evanston, Ill., the first suburb on the north side of the city, home of the Big Ten’s Northwestern Wildcats.

Kathy Fullarton, ’03, was ordained June 8 in Menomonie, Wis. She began her call as associate pastor at First Lutheran in Hayward on June 1, 2003.

Kathleen (Urquhart) Lowery, ’02, accepted a call to Stordahl Lutheran in rural Zumbrota, Minn. She is her first call. She was ordained June 1 at Zumbro Lutheran in Rochester, Minn.

The ‘90s

Steve King, ’90, wrote the script and songs lyrics of a recently produced musical “Wherever You Go,” about the story of Ruth. The show was produced by the Maple Lake Community Theater, Maple Lake, Minn. His spouse, Becky, wrote the musical scores. He is pastor at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Maple Lake.

Julie Malone, ’03, performed in the play in the role of Naomi. She is pastor at Mount Hermon Lutheran Church in Annandale, Minn.


John Foss, ’95, and his wife, Sarah, celebrated son Caleb John’s birth on Aug. 19. Caleb was baptized on Dec. 28, by his grandfather, Leslie Foss, ’70, at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Bremerton, Wash., where John serves as pastor. John and Sarah have three other children.

Linda Hatcher, ’95 was called by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council to serve as chaplain at Artman Lutheran Home in Ambler, Pa.

Leif Espeland, ’97, has been stationed in Iraq since April 2003. He serves as an army chaplain. After attending the basic course for Army chaplains, he was assigned to his first unit at Fort Carson, Colo., on Sept. 11, 2000. His current assignment in Iraq has kept him very busy—working every day for the last 10 months. He looks forward to returning to the states as soon as he is able.
forward to receiving mid-term break so he can see his wife, Ann, and three sons (Joe, Paul 4 and Lars 2).

Kris Cox, ’99, was mobilized to active duty service as an Air Force chaplain after the events of 9/11. He remains on active duty and is currently stationed in the Colorado Springs area.

Gissela Varinia (Blanco-) Espinosa, ’99, accepted a new call to serve as pastor/developer to a new Latino congregation in Phoenix. She named the new congregation “Iglesia Luterana Vida Nueva” (New Life Lutheran Church). She and her husband, Isidro, (a seminary student) are excited about this new journey of faith. They moved from Dallas at the end of October to start in Phoenix Nov 1, 2003.

Stephanie Swanson, ’99, and husband, Charles, celebrated the birth of Sophia Ruth Swanson on May 13. Sophia was received into the Lord’s family through baptism on June 1. Stephanie serves as associate pastor at St. John Lutheran Church in Madison, S.D.

The ‘80s

Dennis Wenzel, ’80, graduated with an M.A. in religious studies with a special emphasis in spiritual direction from the University of Detroit Mercy in December 2002. He is the pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Plymouth, Ind. He invites 1980 grad who may be in the area to stop by.

Dennis Brostrom, ’82, received his D.Min. from New Geneva Theological Seminary in Colorado Springs, Colo., in May 2003. He did his course work there from 1996-1999. The title of his dissertation is Hope Remains: Sustaining Viable Ministry in a Small or Declining Congregation. He serves two LCMS parishes along the North Shore of Lake Superior in Minnesota— Faith Lutheran Church, Silver Bay, and Shepherd of the Lake Lutheran Church, Two Harbors. Both congregations are presently involved in building programs.

The ‘90s

Kevin Ruffcorn, ’79, accepted a call to serve as pastor-developer of a new ministry start in Surprise, Ariz. He and his wife, Faye, moved to Arizona in December. The new congregation will be the second Lutheran congregation he has developed.

Al Franzmeier, ’85 published his first novel since his retirement in 2000. The Spinal Bridge (Publish America, 2004) is set in the Depression era in the rural town where he grew up. The organization he founded, CrossTies, also recently published his book, The First Words of Jesus, which examines the Beatitudes.

Roger David Aus, ’67, retired from the ministry at the German-speaking Lutherkirche, Berlin in October. In November he also published a collection of seven essays, My Name is Legion: Palestinian Jewish Traditions in March 5:1-20 and Other Gospel Texts, (University Press of America, 2003).

The ‘50s

Northwestern Alum Plans Reunion for Fifties Grads

Northwestern alums of the 1950s take note! Graduates of Northwestern Lutheran Theological Seminary between 1950-59 are invited to gather in Diamond City, Ark. on April 21-22. They will share memories, and dialogue with the Rev. Michael Zacher of Luther Seminary regarding the influence of the Northwestern heritage at Luther today. Graduates and their wives will conclude their gathering with a dinner-theatre cruise on the Showboat Branson Belle on the eve of April 22. Those interested should contact the Rev. Donald F. Riechers, ’55, for more information at Box 1470, Diamond City, AR 72630, or e-mail riechers@webtv.net.

Gerald Gunderson, ’57, and his wife, Ellie, recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. They were married before entering his first year at Luther Seminary. Also, they rejoice in the birth of their fifth grandchild. Gerald baptized the child at Trinity Lutheran Church in Rocky Point, N.Y. Since his retirement, he has served three interims and has served as a Sunday supply preacher in Long Island. A retired Army chaplain, he regularly leads interfaith services at the two national cemeteries on the island. He greets the fellow members of his class.

In Memory

Sydney Rand, ’43, died on Dec. 17, 2003. Rand was the former president of Waldorf College, Forest City, Iowa, and St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn., served as the U.S. ambassador to Norway, and as an interim president in several colleges. He had experienced several health problems in recent months. He is survived by his wife, Lois, two children, three step-children, nine grand- and seven great-grand-children, and a brother.


Stanley Williamsen, ’52, died of a rare lung disease Nov. 2003. He was 81 years old. He served congregations in Washington, Alaska and Egypt. Following his retirement, he served as a supply preacher for 17 congregations. He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Rosalie, four children, three grandchildren and a brother.

Karl Brevik, ’54, died on Oct. 27, 2003 of heart complications. He led congregations in Minnesota, Montana and Illinois. He was also a published author, former religion studies instructor at Concordia College, Moorhead, Minn., and lecturer at Augsburg College in Minneapolis. For the past 17 years, he lived in Indian Wells, Calif., and co-ran Brevik Travel International, Inc., a popular group travel company specializing in arranging international trips for clergy and congregations. He is survived by Sharon his wife, four children, three stepchildren, 14 grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Everybody loves a birthday party—and it’s even better when you’re the guest of honor! Westwood Lutheran Church, St. Louis Park, Minn., makes sure no one feels left out when they gather for “Everybody’s Birthday Party,” a giant celebration of every member of the congregation. Twelve tables are set—for each month of the year—and people gather at “their” table to share cake and stories with others who share their birthday month.

Members of the University Lutheran Church of Hope, Minneapolis, share their artistic gifts in a year-long festival of their talents. Monthly rotating exhibitions highlight work by ULCH members in media such as ceramics, photography, two- and three-dimensional crafts, sculpture, and children’s drawings. A brochure detailing the schedule was a useful piece to invite visitors, local artists and community residents.

What to do with those single-day school holidays? Turn them into a mini-camp at church! In honor of Valentine’s Day, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Vienna, Va., held a “Love-In” for elementary school-age children on the President’s Day holiday in February. The day—which was led by a church member who specializes in clown ministry—included games, crafts and snacks with a “love one another” theme, as well as a project for shut-ins and chapel with a love offering for children in Namibia. A nominal cost covered supplies and a pizza lunch.

Trinity Lutheran Church in Taylor’s Falls, Minn., encourages its members to participate in a media fast during Holy Week and instead use the time spent turning off the TV to read the Bible and meditate on the Christ’s journey to the cross. “Little in popular culture encourages us to slow down and cultivate a contemplative life before God,” wrote Pastor Steve Thorson. “Avoiding at least one kind of media can allow for more reflection, prayer and a deeper life before God.”
Luther Seminary FRIENDS Annual Spring Program & Luncheon Features Share-Save-Spend Founder, Nathan Dungan. Saturday, April 3, 2004 Olson Campus Center Nathan Dungan, LLC, author of Prodigal Sons and Material Girls: How Not to be Your Child’s ATM (Wiley) and founder of Share-Save-Spend, is this year’s guest speaker at the FRIENDS Spring Program & Luncheon. Tickets are required. The event includes a book sale, book signing and silent auction. Proceeds from this event will benefit the FRIENDS Endowed Scholarship Fund. Dungan is an award-winning speaker and expert on family finances and the effects of mass marketing on young people. His book Prodigal Sons and Material Girls introduces a new approach to money management called the Share-Save-Spend system. He has been widely quoted in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, USA Today and Time magazine. He has also appeared on CBS, CNN and PBS. Tickets are $15 per person (includes program, lunch and $5 tax deductible donation for student scholarships). To purchase tickets, or for more information call Elaine Westby, (651) 633-6201.

Previews 2004 Thursday, April 22 and Thursday, April 29, 2004 Olson Campus Center Want to give youth in your congregation a preview of seminary life? Previews 2004 offers high school students the opportunity to experience a day at Luther Seminary. The event includes break-out sessions, campus tours, talks with students and faculty, cool prizes and more!

Pastors and high school youth in their congregation are invited to participate. Registration is required by April 15. There is no registration fee. To register call 651-641-3419 or visit www.lutherseminary.edu/previews.

Hein-Fry Lecture Examines Lutheran Theology and Practice April 30, 2004 Olson Campus Center Nathan Dungan, author of Prodigal Sons and Material Girls: How Not to be Your Child’s ATM (Wiley) and founder of Share-Save-Spend, is this year’s guest speaker at the FRIENDS Spring Program & Luncheon. Tickets are required. The event includes a book sale, book signing and silent auction. Proceeds from this event will benefit the FRIENDS Endowed Scholarship Fund. Dungan is an award-winning speaker and expert on family finances and the effects of mass marketing on young people. His book Prodigal Sons and Material Girls introduces a new approach to money management called the Share-Save-Spend system. He has been widely quoted in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, USA Today and Time magazine. He has also appeared on CBS, CNN and PBS. Tickets are $15 per person (includes program, lunch and $5 tax deductible donation for student scholarships). To purchase tickets, or for more information call Elaine Westby, (651) 633-6201.

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Centored Life™ Launches New Web Site In congregations across the country, people yearn to discover relevancy between their faith and their daily lives. They struggle with how their faith experience on Sunday connects to their lives the rest of the week— at work, in the community and in the home—the very places where their deepest faith questions surface and are challenged. Centered Life, a major initiative of Luther Seminary, provides answers to this Sunday/ Monday disconnect through equipping congregations to help members understand, discover, and live out God’s calling for their lives.

Learn more about this exciting initiative and how you can be part of it by visiting Centered Life’s newly launched Web site (www.centeredlife.org).

Lifelong Learning Spring/Summer Courses Looking for a spring or summer continuing education course? The Center for Lifelong Learning has updated its list of classes for spring/summer 2004. Visit www.lutherseminary.edu/lifelong_learning to find the latest course entries. Or call for the new spring/summer course catalog at 651-641-3416.

Dual Degree Student Wins the 2004 Peace Initiative Award Glenndine Soiseth is one of three students who won the Rewoldt Student Peace Initiative Award. She is in the dual degree program in social work and theology at Augsburg College and Luther Seminary. She presented her award winning essay on democracy at the 16th Annual Nobel Peace Prize Forum Feb. 21 at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn. The Rewoldt Award is funded through a donation by R.H. Rewoldt, founder of the Peace Race International, an Iowa-based non-profit corporation. Students at the five sponsoring colleges of the Nobel Peace Prize Forum, Augsburg, Gustavus, Concordia, Luther and St. Olaf Colleges, are invited to submit essays considering direct democracy and other models of governance, and their potential for creating a more just and peaceful world. One student from each campus is selected to present his or her essay at the Forum. Soiseth’s essay focused on the point that, “government works when people like you and I make decisions, accept responsibility and get involved.” She finished her presentation by stating that fighting for your values involves risk. “It takes commitment, action, time and sacrifice.”

New KAIROS Course Offering: Leading Change in Changing Contexts—A Centered Life™ Workshop April 26-30, 2004 Learn how to lead your church through changing contexts into the future. You will leave this seminar with a theological construction for making change happen and learn new leadership and management skills. Register online at www.lutherseminary.edu/lifelong_learning or call 651-641-3416.