Luther Seminary is in the midst of a very exciting strategic planning process. Strategic planning allows us to ask the really big questions about our future. Listening to congregational leaders about their vision for church leadership represents a major component in that planning process. The seminary’s health is directly proportionate to our ability to listen to local churches. Dr. Rolf Jacobson, Associate Professor of Old Testament, has accepted the charge to chair the planning process. Dr. David Lose, Academic Dean, and I are working closely with Professor Jacobson in developing our vision for the future.

Strong Interest in Luther Seminary and Its Plan

In January we distributed a “critical factors survey” to more than 8,000 randomly selected Luther Seminary constituents, sending about two-thirds of the surveys via e-mail and one-third through the mail. We received 1,841 responses—a 21 percent response rate. Among those who opened the e-mail, 83 percent responded, which represents an excellent response rate! Based on average results for a survey such as this, these are very high response rates, demonstrating that our supporters are very interested in Luther Seminary and the work we do to prepare the future leaders of the church! (Statistics about what constitutes an average response rate for an online survey vary, but 10 percent is generally considered good.) We find the survey response rate alone extremely encouraging!

Two Clear Factors

In the survey, individuals were asked to rank 10 critical factors affecting congregations on a scale of one to 10, with one being most important and 10 being least important. Two factors clearly emerged as the most significant. These factors were consistent across groups—alumni/ae, donors, age of respondent, geographic location, gender, etc. The two key factors are:

● The Relevance of the Christian Message—A shrinking percentage of Americans identify themselves as Christians. Church leaders and congregations are challenged to witness to the gospel and understand and participate in God’s mission in a world that does not necessarily recognize our truth claims.

● Growing Search for Spirituality, Community and Intimacy—More and more people identify themselves as “spiritual but not religious” while continuing to cry out for community and meaning. Many individuals find meaning as much through popular culture as in the gospel.

The above factors were ranked as either number one or two by 54 percent of respondents. In contrast, no other single factor was ranked one or two by more than 8 percent of respondents. We will pay particular attention to these two factors as we plan and prioritize Luther Seminary’s work in the coming years.

What’s Next?

In addition to this survey, we have also conducted listening sessions nationwide as well as focus groups with faculty, staff, students and board members. Based on what we learned, we have analyzed the results and effectiveness of our current strategic plan. During the next six months, Professor Jacobson and the cabinet will work closely together to complete a full-fledged strategic and operational plan. We hope that both the faculty and the boards will approve this plan in October 2007. We will work to respond thoughtfully, prayerfully and creatively to the opportunities God places before us in the world.

A Final Comment

A retired alum from the Pacific Northwest called Maria Thompson, our Director of Communication, to express his gratitude and respect for the survey. “This is the best thing I’ve seen come out of the seminary in years,” he said. He also suggested that Luther promote the use of the critical factors for discussion in study groups, congregations, etc. Great idea! You can visit our Web site to download a copy of the factors for yourself or for a discussion group. www.luthersem.edu/strategic_plan/ten_critical_factors.asp.

While his comment was flattering, it also reflected a message we have heard repeatedly. If Luther Seminary is striving to “educate leaders for Christian communities,” we must listen to congregations, leaders and other constituents around the country.

Please continue to keep us in your prayers as we build these results into our plan.

Richard Bliese, President and Associate Professor of Missions
This year’s Mid-Winter Convocation, Jan. 10-12, explored “Living Out Our Callings in the Congregation.” This was the fourth and final in a series that addressed the various places we live out our faith: home, work, community and congregation.

The 456 participants gained a deeper understanding of what it means to live out our calling in congregations. The conference gave background and ideas on how to develop, nurture and affirm the callings they and those in their congregations serve. Three plenary speakers, Jack Fortin, Walter Sundberg and Martha Stortz, presented at the convocation.

“A New Reformation”
by Jack Fortin, Executive Director, Center for Lifelong Learning, Luther Seminary

Speaker Jack Fortin addressed the disconnect he sees between congregational members’ daily lives and their involvement in the church on Sunday. In congregations nationwide, Fortin has noticed that Christians are searching for ways to integrate how they live their faith in their workplaces, communities, and homes—the very places where their deepest faith questions surface and are challenged. Yet, congregations often have not helped individuals make the connection between Sunday and the rest of the week.

Fortin called participants to the Centered Life®—a model that helps congregations connect what is taught in the parish on Sunday to people’s daily lives the rest of the week. According to Fortin, this model strengthens congregations as members become committed to and engaged in ministry within and outside the church walls. More information on Centered Life® is available at www.centeredlife.org.


Jack Fortin, Executive Director of the Center for Lifelong Learning, discusses how people can connect what they learn on Sunday with their daily lives.
“The Restless Being of the Church: Congregations in the Crossroads of Christian Identity” by Walter Sundberg, Professor of Church History, Luther Seminary

In his two-part presentation, Walter Sundberg used theological and historical references to show how the church has acted as an agent of freedom and how Martin Luther planted the seed for this.

According to Sundberg, congregations are restless and ambiguous and members can easily lose sight of theological and historical meaning in their day-to-day lives. Citing Luther’s works and the revolutionary way he looked at congregations, Sundberg stressed the importance of remembering the Reformation’s historical impact on congregations.

Luther held that the work of congregations includes nourishing the faithful, as well as reaching those who lack faith. Preaching is for conversion, he said, and ministry should be functional, not sacramental. Given this, Sundberg reports that it’s clear why smaller groups—sects, non-mainline denominations, and individual churches—with their better understanding of their crucial mission role, have gained success that “traditional churches” have not achieved.

“Spiritual but not Religious? A Lutheran Counter Argument” and “Lutheran Spirituality: Blessed to Be a Blessing” by Martha Stortz, Professor of Historical Theology and Ethics, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

Is the church the only place people encounter God? Of course not. But the church does play a unique role in explicitly sharing Jesus’ blessings and in equipping its members to do the same. In her two presentations, Martha Stortz explored the power of the beatitudes in framing life with Christ and carrying us beyond church walls. Living out God’s baptismal promises becomes a way to share those blessings and experience God’s love and hope.

Precisely because of those promises, she argued, we are called to claim our connection with Jesus as changed people, now marked as his disciples in the world. As a place where the sacraments are shared, congregations can be a unique center of spiritual renewal and a source of the divine.

Attendees take time to worship during Mid-Winter Convocation.

View Convocation plenary sessions online at www.luthersem.edu/story/convo

Mid-Winter Convocation also included a number of workshops. Overviews of these workshops are available at www.luthersem.edu/story/convo.
One of faculty member Randy Nelson’s priorities after retiring this year is a long-neglected stamp collection. “I’ve got baskets and bags full of stamps that could probably occupy me for two years,” he said with a laugh. Collecting items used to send letters worldwide will be a fitting hobby for a man who has helped send Luther Seminary students on internships around the globe.

Nelson, 65, Director of Contextual Education and Melvin A. Hammarberg Professor of Contextual Education, has been the seminary’s foremost figure in preparing students for ministry through practical experience in the church and world, particularly through internships. He looks back on his career as a tight-rope walk that has required balancing the church’s needs with those of the many students he has served. “My role has been both to represent the church and yet to say, ‘I want to be an advocate for you as a student,’” said Nelson. It’s an effort that’s appreciated by decades of students.

“Although Randy is nationally known for his career in contextual education—offering new and innovative ways to bring the gospel into the world—I must say, to me, Randy’s greatest gift is his theological depth and perspective.”

—Michael Anderson, ’84

Raised in rural South Dakota, Nelson found encouragement and a sense of call while filling in as preacher at several congregations the summer before his senior year of high school. He received his Master of Divinity degree from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) in 1968 and remained in the Windy City to assist part-time at a north-side congregation, while working toward further degrees at the University of Chicago Divinity School and serving LSTC as a teacher, acting dean of students and assistant to the director of field education. In 1975, he received a call to Luther Seminary.

He began his work with Luther Seminary as Associate Director of Contextual Education in an early joint initiative between Luther Theological and Northwestern Seminaries that would ultimately form Luther. During the 32 years he worked at Luther, he made up to 60 internship-site visits a year, establishing a career that included nationwide and global travel. Nelson also served on the faculty and in 1982 became Director of Contextual Education. Three years ago, his role expanded to include the role of Director of the Western Mission Cluster’s Contextual Leadership Initiative, serving both Luther Seminary and Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary.

Overseeing Contextual Leadership, Clinical Pastoral Education and Cross-Cultural Education as well as internships, Nelson is grateful to his small but reliable staff. He notes an interest in social justice and liberation theology, stemming largely from the movements that surrounded him while in Chicago. Most deeply, he considers his work at Luther Seminary to be pastoral and defined by relationships.
Michael Rogness’ latest students at Luther Seminary learned how long the professor of preaching has been telling the biblical story—and telling it well. After the preachers-to-be had practiced the story of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness, Rogness pulled out his sermon on the story from 1965. Despite references to 60’s icons such as Art Linkletter, Doris Day and Nikita Khrushchev, it was still a powerful example.

Rogness, 72, has been a teacher of preachers at Luther since 1985. He’s retiring as the Alvin N. Rogness Professor of Preaching, a position bearing the name of his father, who served as the seminary’s president from 1954 to 1974. Rogness knows the importance of good preaching. “It’s what congregations look for the most,” he says. “I think everybody on this faculty actually teaches homiletics. I’m just the little hole at the end of the funnel, and it all comes through at the pulpit.”

Raised mostly in Iowa and South Dakota, Rogness received his call while a Fulbright scholar in 1956-57 in post-World War II Germany, then heavy with theological questions. A fifth-generation pastor (counting both sides of his family), he received a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Luther Seminary in 1960 and his Doctorate in Theology degree in Reformation history from Erlangen/ Nürnberg University, Germany, in 1963 after beginning his study there as a Fulbright Scholar. He passed up the chance years later to upgrade his degree to a Master of Divinity for about $25. (He’s most proud of a diploma he received in 1984 from a three-day Hungarian cooking school.)

Rogness spent much of the 1960s in Europe, as a student in Germany, Assistant Professor in Strasbourg, France, and Civilian Chaplain at U.S. Army bases in Germany. It was in 1983, while pastor at his father’s former parish in Duluth, Minn., that he received a letter informing him that he had been nominated to teach at Luther Seminary. Uninterested, he threw it away. But the next year, with his parish in more capable hands, he was more easily persuaded when he learned the position had never been filled.
“They sent me a questionnaire that they sent to all the people nominated,” Rogness recalls. “One of the questions was, ‘How would you plan on teaching homiletics?’ And I answered, ‘I haven’t a clue because I never tried it.’ I figured, ‘Well, that would eliminate me now.’ But one thing led to another, and here I am.”

The adjustment to teaching after 20 years of preaching wasn’t easy. He had to play catch-up with homiletics literature and had to learn how to stretch out his lectures beyond the comfortable length of a sermon by adding more “fluff and stories.”

“Michael is an extremely gifted preacher, and what’s more is that he is equally equipped to teach the craft of preaching, which is no easy task,” says John Bjorge, ’90, who first studied under Rogness as a Master of Divinity student and is now among the first to graduate from Luther’s Doctor of Ministry in Biblical Preaching program. “He understands the need to preach in ways that are compelling and relevant without giving ourselves over to being market-driven and cute.”

Christopher Smith, ’93, likewise a student of Rogness in both his Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry studies, says he’ll always be grateful for the opportunity to learn from Rogness. “Michael always had the knack of being able to offer feedback on our preaching in a way that was honest and direct but also encouraging and very constructive, even if our initial attempts at preaching may not have been all that successful,” says Smith.

“He is a real ally of just plain effective preaching.”

Rogness, who with Eva, his wife of 49 years, has three children and three grandchildren, says he’d be happy to continue teaching part-time at Luther, assuming someone tells him when he becomes senile.

In the meantime, retirement won’t stop Rogness from telling stories. Asked what he would like included in this article, he shared several tales, such as how he and Eva became the best dancers on the faculty, how he salvaged and rebuilt a pipe organ in his basement and how he built an iceboat at his first parish and sailed it at breakneck speeds until a Presbyterian minister broke it.

As for telling the greatest story ever told, “I would say the best hope would be preaching that has theological depth and integrity and is still interesting and well-delivered. You have to have good theology,” he says. “Preaching is the gospel.”

“Did you know?”

Did you know over 400 Luther Seminary students have received scholarships this academic year? All were made possible by gifts to Luther Seminary from individual donors.
Although Lucy Mungai entered Luther’s doctoral program in pastoral care and counseling in a roundabout fashion, it’s hard to imagine a more appropriate path. A native of Kenya, Mungai has been ministering, preaching and leading Christians since she was a teenager. Now that she’s in the doctoral program, she recognizes the value that deeper theological grounding gives her pastoral care work.

Looking back, although she might not have called it “pastoral care” at the time, that’s exactly what she offered to those around her for years. When she read the class descriptions in the Luther catalog she said, “I need these classes!” She’s found that her formal education has challenged her assumptions and guided her work. It’s given her “the language to speak to some of these things that I wouldn’t have had,” she said.

Mungai’s family joined the Luther community in 2003 when her husband, David Mwihia, started his doctorate in theology. Mungai, a high school math and chemistry teacher with three master’s degrees, wanted to continue her education, too. Although she looked at other schools, she found herself drawn to Luther. The more she learned about the pastoral care program, the more she recognized the fit.

Growing up, Mungai was very involved with the Anglican Church. She admired the women she saw in preaching and leadership roles and thought, “When I grow up I want to be like them.” Although she describes herself as very shy as a child, others’ belief in her abilities encouraged her to overcome that obstacle. By the time she was in high school, she was leading youth groups in the Christian Union Movement. She gained hands-on experience in preaching and ministering to the needy while also participating in lay ministry training and mentorship programs.

One might think being a wife, mother of two and a doctoral student would be stressful. Instead, Mungai says what she finds stressful is being powerless to change inequitable systems. She feels called to affirm women in their divine gifts and undo the damage of “learned helplessness.” She wants to address injustice suffered by people who are elderly, struggle with mental illness or are subject to class discrimination, whether in the United States or in Kenya. “That’s in God’s hands,” she said.

“I keep praying that God will open people’s eyes to what God’s purpose for all humanity is,” she said. With her eyes opened to the potential for her pastoral care training, it’s easy to see Mungai is a part of that plan.
Strong faith, great love for the church and generous hearts guided Earl B. and Dorothy Olsons’ giving to Luther Seminary. Earl and Dorothy were the first donors to make a multimillion dollar commitment to Luther Seminary. Earl recently passed away, on Dec. 11, 2006; Dorothy died earlier on July 16, 2000.

The Olsons’ gifts are a testament to their belief in the mission of Luther Seminary to educate leaders for Christian communities. "The Olsons’ generosity helped to put Luther Seminary on a solid financial footing,” said Richard Bliese, Luther Seminary President. “Their gifts were simply invaluable to this school and to its mission to educate leaders for the church. Their gifts were an important endorsement of the seminary’s mission and a strong encouragement to others that this was a place worthy of that level of support.”

There is a saying that “those who give early, give twice.” Through the Olsons’ initial gifts to the seminary, they provided generous financial support. Perhaps even more importantly, these gifts also served as a witness to others that Luther Seminary was deserving of significant gifts and had the capacity to use them wisely.

Kathy Hansen, Vice President for Seminary Relations and Executive Director of the Luther Seminary Foundation, noted the impact of Earl’s deep faith and churchmanship.

“We mourn the passing of Earl B. Olson whose energy, imagination and generosity strengthened not only Luther Seminary but also Concordia College and so many other institutions of the church.”

Earl and Dorothy’s first major gift to the seminary was to fund the Olson Campus Center, which was dedicated in 1994. The gift was given through a charitable remainder trust to endow the maintenance and operation of the building, which is the central gathering place on campus.

The second major gift given by the Olsons was an endowment to mark the 10th anniversary of President Emeritus David Tiede’s leadership of Luther Seminary. The fund became part of a permanent endowment fund for the seminary, providing support for the staff and activities of the office of the president.

The Olsons’ final major gift was through their estate for the Earl and Dorothy Olson Endowed Fund for Biblical Preaching. Earl and Dorothy appreciated pastoral leadership and faithful preaching at their congregation, Vinje Lutheran Church, Willmar, Minn., and other congregations in West Central Minnesota that were part of their lives. Through this endowed fund, Luther Seminary will be able to encourage the formation of excellent biblical preachers.

The Olsons’ gifts to Luther Seminary were abundant and their legacy will be remembered. Earl didn’t find it necessary to give an elaborate explanation for their charitable gifts, but rather would say, “We gave because they needed it. We saw this as a good investment for the future of the church.”

As the Gospel of John says, “the one who says he abides in him ought himself walk in the same manner as He walked.” With their generous hearts and love for Christ’s work in the world, Earl and Dorothy Olson certainly walked in this manner throughout their lives. Thanks be to God for the life and witness of Earl B. and Dorothy Olson!●
Center for Biblical Preaching Offers Wealth of Resources

By Melanie Boulay Becker

In direct response to needs identified in its strategic planning process and further expanding its lifelong learning resources for pastors, Luther Seminary recently launched the Center for Biblical Preaching. This new center focuses on equipping preachers to be faithful and effective in their proclamation ministry. “While there are surely many excellent preachers in the church today, so many people feel that the overall quality of preaching can and should be improved. That is why we started the center,” said David Lose, Academic Dean and Marbury E. Anderson Chair in Biblical Preaching.

According to Lose, leaders at Luther Seminary take the center’s motto, “Dedicated to the renewal of the church’s proclamation,” as a mandate. “We seek to offer today’s preachers excellent resources to equip them to preach lively, faithful, and compelling biblical sermons that bring the Scriptures alive and connect to daily life,” said Lose. “Good preaching can change lives, and we’re out to help preachers do just that.” Grounded in solid Lutheran theology about the nature of the proclaimed word, the center will gather the finest preachers and scholars throughout the church to provide exceptional biblical and preaching resources for contemporary preachers, according to Lose. These resources will come in a variety of forms—from audio, digital, and Web-based resources to an increasing number of workshops and courses.

“In the Company of Preachers”

In April, the center launched a subscription-based, audio resource entitled “In the Company of Preachers” that offers preachers both “compelling instruction and creative inspiration,” according to Lose. Each volume in the series offers 15-20 minutes of instruction on a particular preaching aspect and features four to five carefully selected sermons that illustrate what has been discussed. All of the sermons featured on the CDs have been preached during Luther Seminary’s daily worship in the chapel.

“In the Company of Preachers” is available in CD or downloadable format. “We made it very portable so that pastors can take it with them while making hospital calls, listen to it while jogging, or play it from their computers,” said Lose.

“In the Company of Preachers” will be useful as both a preaching tool and a source of spiritual refreshment. “This quarterly series is a superb idea that meets a real need in preachers’ lives,” said Paul Scott Wilson, Professor of Homiletics, Emmanuel College in the University of Toronto. “Not only do listeners get exposed to new teachings that will help them to sharpen their homiletical skills, they get to hear excellent preaching that mines a rich collection of recorded sermons from Luther Seminary. I know of no resource like it.” Tim Westermeyer, pastor at Mount Olivet Lutheran Church in Plymouth, Minn., also spoke positively about the series: “Part of what a resource like this has the power to do, I think, is to validate, celebrate, and encourage those of us who are in the business of preaching.”

While the introductory issue of “In the Company of Preachers” was distributed free of charge to 13,000 contacts on the active ELCA roster, future issues can be purchased at www.luthersem.edu/cbp, where one can also download the introductory edition free of charge. Produced quarterly, future issues will be available via CD or for direct download. Topics to be addressed in the months ahead will include:

- Opening the Sermon—July 2007
- Preaching the Old Testament—October 2007
- Closing the Sermon—January 2008
- Telling the Story—April 2008

“Good preaching can change lives, and we’re out to help preachers do just that.”

—David Lose, Academic Dean and Marbury E. Anderson Chair in Biblical Preaching
Students Give High Marks to Distributive Learning Program

Students in Luther Seminary’s distributive learning program had very positive things to say in a recent survey. Distributive learning is a format that allows students to obtain their degrees by taking half their classes online and the other half in short-term, on-campus intensive courses. The program allows them to complete their degrees without moving to the St. Paul campus. Most students complete the program in four years.

The study found that distributive learning students were enthusiastic about the opportunity to immediately integrate their learning into their ministry. Hal Weldin, Coordinator of the M.A. Youth and Family Distributed Learning Program, noted the benefits of this integration. “Distributive learning students are already embedded in a ministry setting. As a result, their theological education influences their ministry and their ministry influences their theological education.”

Currently, Luther Seminary offers a distributive learning program master’s degree in Children, Youth and Family (CYF) ministry. Introduced in 2001, the program currently has 63 students and 11 graduates with seven more students graduating in May 2007. To participate in the program, students are required to be in a supervised ministry setting. They aren’t new-comers to CYF. They average seven years of ministry experience when entering the program.

The evaluation of the distributive learning program included an online survey, two focus groups with students and 36 individual phone interviews with graduates and current students. Ninety percent of current students and 80 percent of graduates participated in the survey.

One of the key findings from the study was the invaluable importance of the relationships among the groups. They also declared that the study of theology shifted their vocational thinking. Beyond this, 89 percent of students identified that the program produced positive changes in their job performance and 98 percent reported positive growth in their perception of themselves as ministers as a result of the program.

In addition to finding that the program has a positive impact on their ministry, students also report a lack of the debt that traditional (on-campus) students often carry. About 70 percent of residential students carry debt and their average indebtedness is $41,681. In contrast, 80 percent of students in the CYF distributive learning program have indicated that they graduate without additional educational debt.

Students also had high praise for Luther Seminary, rating it a 4.6 on a scale of one to five with five as the highest potential mark. When asked for their comments, most focused on working with Luther Seminary staff and faculty. One student described Luther Seminary as a “great environment for this type of learning.” Another student commented that while not expecting to enjoy online learning, the student found it provided an opportunity to “challenge and direct my learning and have conversation with the professor and peers at a deeper level of understanding.”

Quarterly E-newsletter

The Preacher’s E-pistle, a new quarterly e-newsletter, provides a wealth of information to keep readers up-to-date on news from the Center for Biblical Preaching. Content includes: timely articles on biblical preaching, reviews of current books on preaching, information about continuing education resources, updates on the center and more. Interested in receiving the e-newsletter? Sign up at www.luthersem.edu/cbp.

Online Preaching Resource

This coming Advent, the center will unveil www.workingpreacher.com. The center’s objective in creating the Web site is to build an engaging and thoughtful site to which pastors can turn for sermon preparation and inspiration. “We are working to create a trusted resource that will gain the respect of the preaching community,” said Lose. Among other things, this free tool will offer preachers dependable scholarship on biblical texts, articles on the art and craft of preaching, interviews with top preachers and teachers, and current commentary on preaching texts.

Support the Center

“Everything about launching the center is exciting,” said Lose. “We think it will be an invaluable resource for preachers.”

The center and all of its resources are supported through the generous and faithful giving of friends of Luther Seminary. To learn more about supporting the center and its efforts, contact John Kilbride in the office of Seminary Relations at jkilbride001@luthersem.edu or at 651-523-1628.
Charles Amjad-Ali, Martin Luther King, Jr., Professor for Justice and Christian Community, has been traveling and speaking extensively both in the United States and abroad. During a recent trip to Pakistan, he gave a major public lecture on “Class, Caste and Gender in South Asia Societies” to the Pakistan Institute of Labour, Education and Research to inaugurate their Silver Jubilee Celebration. He also made a presentation on “Obstacles to, and Future Prospects of, Democracy in Pakistan” before the Human Rights Commission and other non-governmental organizations. In March he spoke to the American Association of University Women about “Islam and the West: Ways of Peace or Violence.”

Paul Daniels, Seminary Archivist and Curator, served as juror for the Woodbury (Minn.) Lutheran Church’s annual Christian Art Festival this spring.

Jack Fortin, ’71, Director of the Center for Lifelong Learning, was a plenary speaker at Mid-Winter Convocation in January. He also spoke to the Grand Canyon Synod that month. Sally Peters, Centered Life Manager, spoke at the Lutheran Seminary Friends Retreat in February. Fortin and Barb Gaiser, Director of Continuing Education, attended the ELCA Lifelong Learning Partners gathering at Spirit in the Desert, Carefree, Ariz., from Feb. 26 through March 2. From March 23 through 25, Fortin and Peters led a Centered Life Orientation at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in Bowling Green, Ohio. On April 22, Peters served as a workshop leader for the Southwest Minnesota Synod Assembly, Redwood Falls, Minn.


David Lose, Marbury E. Anderson Professor of Biblical Preaching and Academic Dean, spoke at the Montana Synod Pastoral Conference in April.

Patricia Lull, Dean of Students, spoke at the Twin Cities celebration of Lutheran Campus Ministry at the University of Minnesota, Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, in Minneapolis on April 14.

Roland Martinson, ’68, Carrie Olson Baalsen Professor of Children, Youth and Family Ministry, spoke at the Lutheran Men in Mission gathering in Marysville, Wash., in March.

Mary Hinkle Shore, Associate Professor of New Testament, is the visiting preaching scholar at Como Park Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minn., this year.

Did you know that Luther Seminary’s continuing education program through the Center for Lifelong Learning is larger than those of the other seven ELCA seminaries put together?

Learn more about continuing education offerings at www.luthersem.edu/lifelonglearning.
Coming to a Town Near You

Terence Fretheim, ’60, Elva B. Lovell Professor of Old Testament, will present “Theological Reflections on the Genesis Flood Story” as part of the Bible and Ministry Conference on “Hearing God Through Genesis” at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich., June 7-9. This fall he will lead the Midvale Lutheran Church (Madison, Wis.) Fall Retreat on “Is the God of the Old Testament Also Our God?” Oct. 12-13.

David Lose, Marbury E. Anderson Professor of Biblical Preaching and Academic Dean, is the keynote speaker for the Northwest Washington Synod Assembly in Lynnwood, Wash., June 1-2.

Patricia Lull, Dean of Students, will be the keynote presenter and preacher at the North Carolina Synod Assembly, May 31-June 2. She also will join other former Lutheran Campus Ministry national directors in a panel discussion during the Lutheran Campus Ministry National Staff Conference, June 25-29 in Chicago.

During the centennial anniversary year of Lutheran Campus Ministry, Lull will speak and preach at a number of events.

Did you know?

Did you know that as recently as 1980, church-wide and synodical support covered 50 percent of Luther Seminary’s budget? Today, direct support from the church covers 12 percent of the budget—gifts from alumni/ae and other friends make up the difference.

Learn how you can help prepare leaders for a church in mission at www.luthersem.edu/gifts.

SOS! Get special online savings from Luther Productions

Luther Productions is throwing out a line to help congregations with educational resource needs.

For 2007, Luther Productions has restructured product pricing up to 40 percent off and is passing the savings on to you.

Order online by June 15 using the code: LPPR207 and receive an additional 15 percent off your order.

Order now at www.lutherproductions.com or call 651-646-5526
The ‘00s

Scott McAnally,’04, and his wife, Jen, are expecting their first child in May.

Joshua Schunk,’04, and Kelli Schunk, celebrated the birth of their second child, Caleb Erwald, on Nov. 2, 2006. He joins his sister Ella.

Laura Overbo,’03, and Daniel Overbo,’03, celebrated the birth of Easton Charles on Dec. 28, 2006. He joins big brother Kyan.

Scott Johnson,’03, and Kristin Johnson,’03, celebrated the birth of Ainsley Joy Suzanne on Jan. 21. Ainsley is their first child.

Jennifer Hackbarth,’03, and Timothy Hackbarth,’04, celebrated the birth of their first child, Ryan Nicholas, on June 28, 2006.

Clint Schnekloth,’02, received a grant from the Siebert Lutheran Foundation to pursue a Doctor of Ministry degree at Fuller Theological Seminary.

Laurie (Johnson) Arroyo,’00, traveled to China in September 2006 to adopt daughter Elianna Mei-Zhen, who was born on Dec. 10, 2005, in the Jiangxi province of China. She was baptized on her first birthday.

Amy (Swanson) Meyer,’00, and her husband Jon, celebrated the birth of a son, Joseph, on Feb. 26, 2007.

The ‘90s

Grady St. Dennis,’99, who has been a pastor at Mount Olivet Lutheran Church in Minneapolis since 1999, has been named Director of Church Relations at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minn.

P.J. Southam,’98, is the author of “The Presbyterian Heritage Daily Devotional: Selections from the Confessions for Each Day of the Year,” a newly published daily devotional for Presbyterians and other Christians.

Mari Larson,’96, accepted a call to Spirit of Joy Lutheran Church, a mission congregation in Cottonwood, Ariz.

Karloine Lewis,’94, received her Ph.D. in New Testament Studies from Emory University in May 2006.


Kristofer Skrade,’93, was promoted to Director of New Product Development at Augsburg Fortress Publishers.


The ‘80s

Ronald Marshall,’75, posted on his congregation’s Web page a critique of the new ELCA worship book, Evangelical Lutheran Worship. He also published a critique of the new ELCA sexuality study, “Free in Christ to Serve the Neighbor.” His critique is entitled “Getting Off on the Wrong Foot,” and was published in the January 2007 issue of Forum Letter.

John W. Matthews,’75, was recently elected President of the International Bonhoeffer Society (English Language Section), a non-profit and ecumenical scholarly organization that seeks to promote research in the theology, ethics, and life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Matthews had already served for one
decade as Vice President. He has been actively involved in the Bonhoeffer Society since graduating from Luther Seminary in 1975.

David Otterness, ’70, and his wife, Rebecca, were featured in the January-February issue of Caring Today, a national magazine for family caregivers. David has advanced multiple sclerosis. He retired due to disability in 1977.

The ’60s

Jon Lee, ’66, will be honored by Texas Lutheran University on May 12 with the degree of Doctor of Divinity, Honoris Causa.


The ’50s


James Hofrenning, ’53, and Raymond Siegle, ’60, were the recipients of Alumni Achievement Awards at Concordia College. The awards were given to four individuals during their homecoming celebration in October 2006.

The ’40s


In Memory

Benson Joel Dombi, ’96, died in Jos, Nigeria, on Feb. 9, 2007. His body was laid to rest in his home village.

Raymond Olson, ’39, died Oct. 21, 2006. He was 96. Olson served as the second President of California Lutheran University. He is a former General Secretary for stewardship for the American Lutheran Church. He received an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Divinity, Augustana College, in 1954, and an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws, California Lutheran University, 1971. He served on the National Lutheran Council, Lutheran World Federation, Lutheran Council in the USA, National Council of Churches and World Council of Churches from 1953-1970.

Alumni/ae Council: Preparing Students for Ministry

In 1986, the Alumni/ae Council was established to serve as a resource for the support of the seminary and its alumni/ae. The council meets twice a year and currently includes 18 members representing 10 different synods. According to Alumni/ae Council President John Bjorge, ’90, Pastor of Hosanna Lutheran Church in Forest Lake and Hugo, Minn., the council plays a vital role in the relationship between the seminary, alumni/ae and students.

“The council works to support students in their seminary experiences and their transitions into church leadership as alums,” he said. “It’s very natural for us to have a panel of students be part of our meetings as a way to listen.” The council also hosts annual dinner events with students, including a dinner in the fall for incoming students, a dinner in January for graduating seniors and their spouses, and a “church basement” dinner for students before they begin their internships (an introduction to upcoming church basement dinners they’ll enjoy during their internships).

The council helps address challenges that face the seminary and the church in a variety of ways. The Alumni/ae Calling Team encourages the identification and nurture of potential professional church leaders, the Heritage Society helps to establish a strong financial foundation, the Faithfulness in Ministry awards serve to celebrate the faithful ministries of all alumni/ae, and the Alum-in-Residence Program—which involves an experienced graduate attending classes for a week each year—helps students connect the importance of their classroom work with real parish experiences. Most recently, the council has committed personal financial resources toward participation as a group in the adopt-a-seminarian program, by partially funding a student in the fall of 2008. “In addition to doing our part to address the issue of student indebtedness, we hope to inspire other alumni/ae to also support seminarians,” Bjorge said.
Thirty-five years in parish ministry could lead a pastor to believe he’s got things all figured out. David Holm, ’71, knows better.

This year’s alum in residence is constantly searching for ways to make the faith come alive. The alum-in-residence program brings an alumna/us onsite who attends classes for a week with current students, providing an experienced voice and demonstrating the relevancy of classroom learning.

Holm, who has served as senior pastor of Normandale Lutheran Church in Edina, Minn., since 1993, is known in the Twin Cities for his solid, imaginative leadership. During his week on campus earlier this spring, Holm was delighted to engage in conversation with students about how what they were learning at seminary intersects with the life he experiences in the congregation.

“I was curious to see how they would wed academic enterprise with practice,” he said. “It was a most thrilling thing for me to engage with students about it.”

“How do you do stewardship with pastoral integrity?” he was asked in one course. In another, students asked “How do you creatively go about Bible study and teach Scripture? What is your definition of ‘church,’ and what does it mean to be a member? How do you see Normandale as a prophetic congregation? What is your favorite synoptic gospel, and how do you use it in preaching?”

“I was stunned to see so much connection between their subject matter and my parish life,” he said. “I tend to stereotype from my own academic background. It was pretty straightforward, by-the-book back then.”

Plenty has changed—both for Holm and for the church—since he entered Luther Seminary in the late ’60s.

“The church was a very different place then,” he said. “It was more insular. People expected certain things from the church, and the church expected certain things from them.” Now, he believes, there’s a more global context. Congregations are
more connected around the world. Normandale has a long-standing relationship with Lutheran Health Care Bangladesh that enriches its sense of mission both near and far. This has been a growing area for Holm. “It wasn’t until (I was serving my third parish) that I started seriously thinking about how we used our resources beyond ourselves.”

Holm admits he has changed plenty since his student days. “I almost didn’t make it through my first year {at Luther Seminary},” he said. As a University of Wisconsin-Madison alumnus, Holm said, “I was persona non grata when I started” at Luther Seminary. “I hadn’t gone to any of the Lutheran Schools—St. Olaf, Concordia, Gustavus—and I wasn’t in on how to behave.”

He speaks fondly of the positive role that then-president Alvin Rogness and his wife, Nora, played in his life at that time. He also counts Alvin Rogness as one of his most trusted mentors.

Discussing unique approaches that he has taken, Holm points to his friendship with hymn writer and poet Herb Brokering as the cornerstone of his passion for creative imagination and imagery in worship. This Lent, he and Brokering brought an incubator with two dozen chicken eggs into the sanctuary so the congregation could experience the anticipation and expectation of bringing forth new life at Easter. Children, especially, were enthralled by the warming lights and the tiny cracks that appeared in the eggs along the way.

“I’m not sure the big church has ever integrated creativity into the curriculum,” he said. “That’s a mistake.”

Does this sound like a paradox, coming from a man who admits worship at his church is “all about the smells and bells?” “Of course,” he said, smiling. “The stuff we’re doing is right out of the emergent church. It just has tradition as the frame.”

Paradoxes such as this are not new to Holm. More than three decades in the parish have taught him to live with the paradoxes—as well as the successes and failures—of ministry. When he graduated from seminary, Holm says, “I had really big dreams. It’s embarrassing to say how many have come true.” But he is quick to point to the source of his passion: his deep faith in God’s creative power. “I have known so many incredible people along the way. I have had so many incredible opportunities. What God has done for and through me… it’s been really neat.”

Did you know Luther Seminary is home to Old Muskego Church? The church was the first structure built by Norwegian immigrants in America dedicated exclusively to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. The structure was originally constructed in the Wind Lake area near Racine, Wis., in 1844. It was moved, piece by piece, to the Luther Seminary campus in 1904 and today is on the National Register of Historic Sites.

Individuals interested in viewing the church should call the information desk at Olson Campus Center main lobby at 651-641-3456. For group tours, please contact Lynne Moratzka (in advance) at 651-641-3419 or lmoratzk@luthersem.edu.
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sytte Linen Mai Celebration
Thursday, May 17, 3 p.m.
Old Muskego Church,
Luther Seminary Campus

Sytte Linen Mai commemorates the anniversary of the Norwegian constitution. All are invited to participate in a service of hymns (sung in English) and thanksgiving. Lefse will be served on the lawn following the service. This event is free and open to the public.

138th Commencement Ceremony for Luther Seminary Students
Sunday, May 27, 3 p.m.
Central Lutheran Church,
333 S. 12th Street, Minneapolis

More than 160 Luther Seminary students will receive degrees granted for Master of Arts, Master of Divinity, Master of Sacred Music, Master of Theology, Doctor of Ministry, and Doctor of Philosophy. Walter Sundberg, Professor of Church History, will give the commencement address.

This event is free and open to the public. Parking at the lot adjacent to Central Lutheran Church is available for a fee. For more information call 651-641-3451 or go to www.luthersem.edu/calendar/commencement.asp.

Healthy Congregations and Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times
Led by: Peter Steinke
June 22, 9:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.
Stub Hall Lounge, Luther Seminary

Come and hear Peter Steinke talk about his new book: “Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What.” Registration, including lunch, is $40. For more information and registration contact Carolyn O’Grady at the Minneapolis Area Synod office, 612-230-3318, or e-mail at c.ogrady@mpls-synod.org.

The event is sponsored by the ELCA Minneapolis and St. Paul Area Synods along with Gary Wilkerson, Visiting Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling, Luther Seminary.

Upcoming Kairos Courses
For more information about any of the Kairos courses listed below, go to www.lutherseme.edu/lifelonglearning.

All classes are on the Luther Seminary campus.

Did you know?
Did you know it is possible to make a charitable gift to Luther Seminary that will continue to pay you income for the rest of your life?

Find out more at www.luthersem.edu/gifts/ways_to_give.asp.
Students Gain Cross-Cultural Experience Just Two Miles Away

This past winter, 12 Master of Divinity (M.Div.) students spent their January break between semesters immersed in the local Hmong community. Seminary students in the M.Div. program are required to study in a culture different than their own prior to graduation. The students reported that they found themselves profoundly changed by the experience.

Andrew Nelson and Rebecca Miller were two of the students who participated in this cross-cultural experience not far from home—the Hmong culture in St. Paul, Minn. Students from Luther Seminary were joined by students from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, Calif.

“The Twin Cities has one of the largest populations of Hmong in the United States,” said Nelson, an M.Div. middler. “Minnesota has a deserved reputation as a Caucasian state, but in the heart of the place there is this entire other culture—with as much claim to the name ‘Minnesotan’ as anyone. It’s so exciting.”

The students had the opportunity to work closely with one church and its leader, Pastor William Siong, ’04. Siong was pleased to share his community at Hmong Central Lutheran Church in St. Paul with the students. “I like to tell people about my culture and help them understand we have needs here,” said Siong. “We need leaders to reach out here,” he explained.

Rebecca Miller, M.Div. senior, learned a lot in the program. “It was such a great learning experience, to be in community together,” she said. The students met daily for two weeks with members of the local Hmong community, including scholars, business leaders and pastors. On Sundays, they participated in Hmong church services throughout the Twin Cities.

During his experience, Nelson was struck by how different the Hmong worldview is from the one he’s been taught to preach. “In the Hmong culture, forgiving sin is important, but so is being freed from the power of evil spirits,” he said. “I learned that within this and other cultures, the language we use by default isn’t the most helpful in all situations.” He found that this knowledge changed him. “It calls me to be aware,” he explained. He said it called him to ask important questions, including ‘Who am I speaking to? How do they diagnose their problems? How do I address them properly? What’s the most helpful way to address them?’

Miller was impressed by the hospitality in the Hmong culture. Nervous about attending a funeral on her first day, she wondered whether people might be upset by the students’ presence. Would they be in the way? She was pleasantly surprised. “People came over and offered something to drink, asked us to have a meal with them,” she said. “They thanked us for being there. It was amazing to be treated that way. It was like that everywhere we went,” she continued. This experience prompted her to ask some additional questions about church. “What if the church was that hospitable?” she asked. “What if that was what it was like when people came into church?”

Miller found that the experience left her excited about local missional opportunities. “Refugees are everywhere (rural, urban, suburban),” she explained. “You don’t have to go overseas (to work with them). This is a way for a congregation to do mission work on its doorstep,” she said.

Looking back on how the experience affected him, Nelson echoed her sentiments. “This experience changed my view of ministry.” This experience was a significant one, even among the seminary’s cross-cultural opportunities. “For a local experience, this is one of the most transformative I’ve seen” said Rod Maeker, Director of Cross-Cultural Education.
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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