Graduation on May 27 was a great celebration of leadership for the church. The new bells, at Central Lutheran Church, the largest of which is 4,800 pounds, marked the day of Pentecost with a powerful ring of the Spirit. “I will begin my new ministry in the parish in just three weeks,” remarked one student after the ceremony. “This worship service was just what I needed to get me started.” The leaders walked up to the altar and promised to serve their Lord faithfully wherever the wind of the Spirit sends them. In all, 178 leaders graduated—the largest graduation in over 10 years! These students literally came from every corner of the earth; and now, in the spirit of Pentecost, these leaders will be sent out to the whole world. The day was spirit-filled; it was glorious!

After one week of down time—yes, one week!—classes began afresh on Luther Seminary’s campus. “There is no summer break at Luther Seminary; the students keep coming,” commented one seasoned faculty member. Another added: “It’s my favorite time to teach courses. It’s more relaxed.”

It’s true. The seminary in summer runs just like many congregations in summer; that is, there is no actual “down time” from June through August. One busy season just transitions into the next. Summer Greek, Doctor of Ministry cohorts in Biblical Preaching and Congregation Mission and Leadership, Kairos lifelong learning classes, conferences, distributed learning students in the Children, Youth and Family Program, Clinical Pastoral Education classes. The classrooms are filled. The air is full with the buzz of learning. It’s a different rhythm during the summer. Students—and some faculty members—are wearing shorts. The campus is a beehive of activities.

On another summer note, our strategic planning survey results pointed out that “Relevance of the Christian message” was top on the list for what the church needs from future leaders. One summer program addressing this is the distributed learning program for Children, Youth and Family. They spend most of the fall and spring taking their courses online. In the summer, however, they gather on campus for intensive courses. (In June, 25 distributed learning students were on campus for intensive classes.) The goal of these courses is to teach students to relate the gospel to people in the first third of life. The excitement around these programs is particularly noticeable as these leaders from all around the country gather in the cafeteria for lunch and in their dorms at night to share their stories about youth ministry.

Summer is almost over as you read this! A very large entering class of students is coming to campus this fall. Summer, thank God, was a busy “down time.”

Richard Bliese, President and Associate Professor of Missions
First Graduates Complete New D.Min. Programs

By Melanie Boulay Becker, Special Correspondent

This spring, the first two cohorts graduated from the new Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) programs at Luther Seminary: Congregational Mission and Leadership (CML) and Biblical Preaching (BP). Nineteen graduates, 10 CML and nine Biblical Preaching students, received their diplomas in May.

“It’s been a wonderful feeling to watch the D.Min. programs grow from conception to seeing actual graduates receive their diplomas,” said Richard Bliese, Luther Seminary President. “More importantly, however, in the days ahead we’ll be watching the growth and transformation of ministries as these programs change leaders, their congregations and, therefore, thousands and thousands of lives.”

Programs launched in 2002 and 2004

Introduced as part of Luther Seminary’s strategic plan, Serving the Promise of Our Mission, these programs were launched in response to church needs. During the strategic planning process, the seminary conducted nationwide listening sessions to discover what congregations needed to prepare leaders for mission. The feedback was clear. Congregations wanted their pastors to preach with conviction in ways that were rooted deeply in scripture. They also wanted their pastors to be able to lead more effectively within the complex and ever-changing North American culture.

Seminary leaders put a lot of thought into what kind of leaders the seminary should be producing. “Their primary conclusion was that the church was called into mission,” said Paul Lokken, Associate Dean of Graduate Theological Education. “We concluded that we were called upon as part of our vocation as a seminary to produce the kinds of leaders the church would need to be in mission in the 21st century.”

In response to these clear directions, Luther Seminary created the two new D.Min. programs. The five-year program in Congregational Mission and Leadership (CML) began in 2002 and the three-year program in Biblical Preaching began in 2004.

“The D.Min. in Biblical Preaching is a concrete response of the seminary to the church’s cry for better preaching,” said David Lose, Academic Dean. Lose holds The Marbury E. Anderson Chair in Biblical Preaching and leads the seminary’s Biblical Preaching D.Min. program.

Craig Van Gelder, Professor of Congregational Mission, who leads the seminary’s CML program, addressed how the program meets the needs of busy pastors who find focusing on theological thought and discussion difficult. “This Congregational Mission and Leadership program is structured

D.Min. Graduates in the Congregational Mission and Leadership program include: (front row, from left) Craig Van Gelder (Advisor) and Kathleen Haller; (second row, from left) Alvin Luedke (Advisor), Melanie Wallschlaeger, Robert Sachs, Michael Peck, William Enns; (back row, from left) Lauren Ley, Edward Treat, John Paulson, Michael Stangeland and Keith Kolstad.
First Graduates Complete New D.Min. Programs (continued)

to create the kind of space for students to think theologically about ministry,” said Van Gelder.

Seminary leaders were impressed by the graduating cohorts throughout the process.

“Both groups fulfilled most every aspiration we had for students in the program,” said Lokken. “They were good students who formed close relationships with each other. Their coursework was excellent and in every way they are a credit to Luther Seminary.”

“We are very proud of their work,” he said, underscoring the key role they played in establishing a successful degree program.

This year’s graduates commended the programs. “The program gave me a renewed vigor for ministry,” said Michael Peck, a CML graduate and pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Overland Park, Kan. “I don’t think I’ve been more excited about my work at Holy Cross than I am right now,” he said.

“This program has fundamentally changed my ministry. I’m so grateful!” exclaimed a Biblical Preaching graduate. “I’ve always been a strong preacher. But I’m a much better preacher today now that I’ve participated in the D.Min. program.”

Cohort Approach Proves Crucial

Both programs use a cohort-based peer learning approach combined with regular face-to-face learning. This approach allows students to remain rooted in their current ministerial context and allows their ministry to shape their studies and their studies to shape their ministry.

Both seminary leaders and the students found the cohort model to be a key component of success of the programs. “We find it’s an extraordinarily effective way to structure the programs,” said Lokken.

“The cohort approach very much assists the students in completing the program,” he explained. “I think one of the chronic problems of D.Min. programs generally is that graduation rates are not as high as they should be. We’re finding that our graduation rates in these programs are very, very high. We attribute that to the cohort model.”

Cohort Critical

“Excellent preaching isn’t simply a goal, it’s a journey, and having trusted companions to accompany you on the way is immensely helpful,” said Lose, describing the Biblical Preaching cohorts. “That’s why the cohort model of instruction has been such a vital part of the program. There is a level of spiritual support and accountability that becomes very important for our students.”

Earnest Tate, a graduate of the D.Min. in Biblical Preaching and an associate pastor at Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, describes his cohort as one in the Body of Christ. “When one suffers, we all suffer,” he said. “For me, a big part of this was the opportunity to be exposed to other scholars.” He also appreciated that he could continue with his regular responsibilities. “I didn’t miss a beat while in class,” he said.

“Through the cohort, I got to know people really well,” said Mary Gustafson, another graduate of the Biblical Preaching program, and Rector of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, Southbridge, Mass. “This group of friends prayed for me—and I for them,” she said. She expects the connections she has made to continue to thrive. “I assume we will remain

D.Min. Graduates in the Biblical Preaching program include: (front row, from left) David Baer, Mary Gustafson, John Bjorge, Eugene Zeller; (back row, from left) Earnest Tate, Michael Kroona, Ronald Jensen, Michael Rogness (Advisor), Timothy Bauer and Christopher Smith.
friends. I’m hoping to have members of my cohort, their families and youth groups come and stay with us when they come to New England.”

In describing the value of the cohort for the CML students, Van Gelder said he jokes with the students that everyone threatens to quit at least three times during the five years required to complete the CML program. “Everybody goes through hard times,” he said with all seriousness. “Some people change pastorates during that five years, some people go through personal difficulties— but (thanks to the cohort), they sustain each other.”

“The cohort aspect of the program was crucial,” said Kathleen Whippo Haller, a CML graduate who serves as associate pastor for congregational care at Trinity English Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Ind. “In addition to professors’ teaching, the cohort format expects colleagues to learn from one another,” she explained. Haller confessed that she may have quit if not for the cohort. “Challenges arise in life and ministry in the course of a multi-year program. It would have been easy to drop out. The cohort’s commitment to one another made it impossible to do that.”

Peck echoed Haller’s sentiments. “As I’ve listened to stories of folks who have been through similar programs that didn’t have the cohort model, what I hear is that completion was a lot more difficult when they were on their own. For us I think there was a sense of not wanting to let the others down.”

As a member of Michael Peck’s congregation, Alan Walter reports that he saw real value in the cohort model. “It gave Pastor Mike an opportunity to develop a lot of relationships with others around the country that will be important to him throughout his time as a pastor,” said Walter.

**Context Crucial**
Context, which is inherent in the seminary’s cohort model, is another key component of the D.Min. program.

“I don’t think I’ve been more excited about my work at Holy Cross than I am right now.”

– Michael Peck, CML graduate and pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Overland Park, Kan.

“The D.Min. program is the highest degree possible for ministers who are practicing, so every person in the program has a ministerial context,” said Lokken. He also pointed out that ministry and context are inherently intertwined. “Ministry that misses context is not effective ministry. We want a program where the students develop profound knowledge and a sense of the theological but also are able to apply that to context, because in order to be effective, ministry has to be related to context.”

On the biblical preaching side, David Lose said, “Good preaching is never abstract or theoretical; it is concrete, preaching to a particular people at a particular time and place. That’s why meeting preachers in their context is so important.” He also pointed out the benefits to congregations. “The parishes that our students serve benefit too as they learn how important preaching is to the life and vitality of the congregation.”

“For us, the issue with the Congregational Mission and Leadership program is ‘how do you help pastors help learn to lead within their settings?’” said Van Gelder. “Studying in context is basic to the design of the degree,” he explained. “We don’t take them out of their ministry.”

**What’s Next?**
Both the CML and the Biblical Preaching programs continue to grow. Together, the programs have more than 80 students and have a broad ecumenical appeal. Along with pastors in the ELCA, 13 additional denominations are represented in these programs including other Lutherans, United Church of Christ, American Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist and Salvation Army—Canada. Luther Seminary leaders are constantly working to improve the programs. “We want to strengthen the programs in terms of recruiting and financial support,” said Lokken. “More importantly, we’re not going to sit and rest on our good success. We are constantly working to improve the programs to make them more relevant to ministry in the church.”

For more information on the D.Min. programs and to read more about current D.Min. students, go to www.luthersem.edu/dmin.
Luther Seminary conferred degrees on 178 witnesses to Christ’s gospel at the 138th Commencement on May 27, at Central Lutheran Church, Minneapolis. The class was the largest in over 10 years.

Walter Sundberg, Professor of Church History, gave the commencement address. He honored the students as disciples of Christ. “Each of you has borne a cross to get to this day so that you can serve Him as a youth worker, church musician, director of Christian education, teacher, deacon, pastor. You are His disciple.”

Sundberg reminded graduates about their mission to make disciples, warned them of the limits of theology to accomplish this task and reminded them that the Spirit is always present, “whispering in your ear, telling you what to do.”

As leaders of God’s people, Sundberg told graduates that “if you hold to any principle, let it be this one: John 3:16: ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ Be urgent in this principle and make disciples.”

The student response was given by Christopher Kramer, who received a Master of Divinity degree. Kramer encouraged graduates to listen to God in their ministries and to not be afraid because the Lord is with them as they are called to bear Christ in the world.

Among the graduates at the 138th commencement were 22 students from the new Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) programs in Congregational Mission and Leadership and Biblical Preaching. Both D.Min. programs were birthed as a result of the seminary’s strategic plan, Serving the Promise of Our Mission. (See story on page 3.)

In addition to the conferring of degrees, the event also recognized a newly tenured faculty member, Matthew Skinner, Assistant Professor of New Testament. Skinner joined the Luther Seminary faculty in 2002 and is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Graduates who received awards for excellence included:

- The G.M. & Minnie Bruce Award in New Testament given to Peter Gerard Speiser
- The A.E. Hanson Prize in Homiletics, given to: Kevin David Bergson, Katie Anne Keller, Heather Rose Spears and Megan Joy Thorvilson
- The John Milton Prize in Old Testament given to: Peter Gerard Speiser and Megan Leigh Torgerson
- The Graduate Preaching Fellowship given to: Megan Leigh Torgerson (2006) and Marc David Ostlie-Olson (2007)

What you can do: Please pray for these new graduates as they begin or continue their ministries.

To read Dr. Sundberg and Christopher Kramer’s commencement addresses, go to www.luthersem.edu/commencement.
Distributed Learning M.Div. Pilot Program Launches This Fall

By Laura Kaslow, Communication Specialist

This fall, 14 new Luther Seminary students preparing for ordained ministry will begin their academic journeys, although not on campus. Rather, they will be earning their degrees in the context of their own ministry settings. A pilot program for the Distributed Learning Master of Divinity (DL M.Div.) will allow students to complete the requirements of the Master of Divinity degree through a combination of online classes and on-campus intensives. This is an expansion of the seminary’s current distributed course offerings. Luther is the first ELCA seminary to offer a distributed learning Master of Divinity program.

This new program takes away a major barrier for prospective students—geography. For some students, despite a call to ministry, picking up their families and moving across the country is not an option. The DL M.Div. program allows students to follow their calls regardless of their locations.

The DL M.Div. program follows the same academic standards as the residential program, allowing students to receive the same rich, theological education as if they had moved to St. Paul, Minn. It is a comprehensive program that allows students to work in a parish setting while completing their seminary studies. The distributed learning mode allows their ministry to feed their coursework and their coursework to feed their ministry. Additionally, by working in a cohort model, students develop a strong sense of community with their classmates.

“What I love about Luther Seminary’s distributed learning programs is the way they foster collaboration and shared conversation,” said Mary Hinkle Shore, Associate Dean for First Theological Degree Programs and Associate Professor of New Testament. “Something good happens when students and professors gather around scripture, classic theological texts and the rest of our curriculum. For us, technology is not a conveyor belt for content but a tool to gather us for shared study and reflection.”

Six years ago, the seminary launched a distributed learning Master of Arts program in Children, Youth and Family (CYF) ministry. Student and graduate feedback in a recent survey was extremely positive—students felt that this program made a significant difference in their ministry by equipping them with a stronger understanding of the Bible and theology. Distributed CYF students also reported experiencing both spiritual growth and high levels of personal support through their participation in the program.

More information on the DL M.Div. program is available at www.luthersem.edu/dlmdiv.
Many congregations across the United States give generously to help Luther Seminary educate leaders for Christian communities. Over the past fiscal year, 17 congregations gave leadership gifts of $10,000 or more to Luther Seminary. They are being honored as charter members of the seminary’s Leadership Circle of Congregations.

“The congregations of our church are, in the end, the ones who depend on Luther Seminary to do good work,” said Kathy Hansen, Vice President of Seminary Relations. “They receive our graduates. We are honored when congregations also choose to invest in Luther Seminary’s work at the Leadership Circle level. We are grateful to the Leadership Circle of Congregations. May their tribe increase!”

Some Leadership Circle congregations give to the Sustaining Fund, which supports the overall mission and program of the seminary. Others give to specific programs. Many give to provide scholarships to students, including men and women of their own congregations who are attending seminary. These congregations see that providing support to reduce student debt load is critical. Students are now entering seminary earlier in their lives and are often still paying off debt from their undergraduate education. Students often face loans that are difficult to repay with first-call salaries. While new pastors may want to model tithing to their parishioners, they aren’t able to do so while facing very significant loan payments.

“Congregational support is a blessing not only for the student but for the whole church,” said Jenny Peterson,

### Leadership Circle of Congregations, Charter Members*

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<th>Congregation Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
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*As of June 19, 2007
Special Gifts Consultant at Luther Seminary. “Gifts help us to provide an outstanding faculty and contextual educational program. Gifts also help us provide adequate scholarships for our students, which help these committed people answer God’s call.”

Members of the Leadership Circle of Congregations come from a wide range of settings. They are located along the Pacific Coast, in Texas and throughout the Midwest. They are rural, urban and suburban. They range from small congregations (400 to 500 members) to very large parishes (up to 10,000 members) and all sizes in between. While the demographics are varied, they all have one thing in common—a dedication to preparing future leaders for the church.

Zion Lutheran Church in Kent, Wash., Bethlehem Lutheran in Minneapolis and Sheridan Lutheran in Lincoln, Neb., are three members of the Leadership Circle of Congregations. All provide significant tuition support as a part of their giving.

Zion Lutheran provides tuition support by participating in Luther Seminary’s Adopt a Seminarian program. Adopt a Seminarian donors provide full or half tuition for a student, and Luther Seminary matches them with the individual student who receives their generous scholarship. Heather Spears (M.Div. ’07), a recipient of an Adopt a Seminarian gift from Zion Lutheran, noted that the prayers and support she received from the parishioners were of equal importance to the financial support she received.

The Bethlehem Lutheran Church Foundation has also committed to providing tuition support to seminarians from their congregation. The congregation additionally supports their seminarians through regular conversations, prayers, and opportunities to use their gifts in teaching, liturgical leadership and occasionally, preaching. The Rev. Christopher Nelson, Bethlehem’s Senior Pastor, said that supporting seminarians gives the congregation “a sense of being part of the wider church” and that they are “contributing to the future of the church.”

Sheridan Lutheran has been richly blessed by many monetary gifts over the past few years. They are now sharing these blessings by offering a matching fund to support Nebraska students in their seminary education. Sheridan hopes to partner with other Nebraska congregations in order to help ease the financial burden of seminary education, as well as help others find the joy in lifting up future leaders in the church.

To learn more about the Leadership Circle of Congregations and to see a complete list of congregations, go to www.luthersem.edu/LCC

Did you know that Mount Olivet Lutheran in Minneapolis was a catalyst for starting and continues to support Previews, an event that helps youth explore their gifts, callings and various ministry opportunities?
Preserving and Learning from Lutheran Heritage

By Andrew Behrendt, M.Div. Jr.

The Thrivent Reformation Research Program has already established itself as North America’s largest collector of Reformation-era books on microfiche. Now, thanks to a new $300,000 endowment, the program will grow from that collection into a larger conversation.

Based at Luther Seminary, the program received a $150,000 show of support from donors in a recently completed campaign. Doubling the impact is a $150,000 match from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, which in the past has helped to fund the program’s acquisitions.

“The really exciting thing about this matching grant is that it signals that we’re going beyond just having microfiche—that we’re really concerned with bringing the Reformation heritage into conversation with the church today, making it come alive for today,” said Mary Jane Haemig, Director of the Reformation Research Program since 2003 and Associate Professor of Church History at Luther Seminary.

Whereas more and more Reformation scholars nationwide are accessing the program’s 40,000-plus titles through interlibrary loan (a database is at http://staupitz.luthersem.edu), the program will now also provide regular forums in which such scholars can interact.

Haemig anticipates more events along the lines of the program’s North America Luther Forum, which in

spring 2006 brought together experts from across the continent and across the ecumenical spectrum to discuss their scholarship of Martin Luther. Among the new programs made possible by the $300,000 will be the Colloquy on Lutheran History and a forum meeting at Luther Seminary twice this fall and three times next spring that will encourage teachers at area colleges, universities and seminaries in their study of topics in Lutheran history.

Donors see their contributions to the program as a way to preserve their faith’s heritage. “Being a converted Lutheran, as opposed to being born Lutheran, I have, for a lay person, read considerably, and I understand the value of that. My wife does, too,” said Ray Conger of Detroit Lakes, Minn., who with his wife, Dorothy, determined this spring to share their blessings with the program. Said another donor: “We feel strongly that Lutheran values need to be passed on and reinforced, and (donating) was a good way to see to it that that was done.”

“The church always needs to be reformed—Lutherans have known that for centuries,” added Haemig, noting her thankfulness to donors. “And so to look once again at our Reformation heritage, to talk together about what it means for today, that’s something we always need to do. Luther’s insights are not dead—they enliven, enlighten our church life today.”

To learn more about the Thrivent Reformation Research Program, go to www.staupitz.luthersem.edu
Luther Seminary has terrific faculty and a long history of stimulating classes for laity. But what if you live in Texas?

Until recently, traveling to St. Paul, Minn., was the only way to take advantage of the popular Lay School of Theology courses. But starting this fall, one lay school class per session will be available in a distributed learning format—broadcast via the Internet. That means individuals or congregational groups can grow deeper in faith without having to leave their neighborhoods.

“We’ve always had people asking, ‘Do you have anything online?’” said Barb Gaiser, Director of Continuing Education. “There is a great need for quality adult education classes out there, and the market is huge. We have terrific professors here and a technology team that’s excited to make it happen. It’s a perfect fit.”

An online Kairos class last winter served as a testing ground for the process, with great success, said Gaiser. Presentations were broadcast over the Internet via streaming video, and participants were able to send questions via e-mail as the class was being taught.

For groups, it’s recommended that two laptop computers are available: one to facilitate projecting the video presentation, and a second to e-mail questions and comments to the instructor at Luther Seminary. A high-speed Internet connection is necessary to view the streaming video.

Courses are $60 for an individual registration, or $100 for a group, which, Gaiser said, allows for more interaction and conversation. In case the Monday evening time (7-9 p.m. CST) isn’t convenient, classes will be archived and available online for one week.

The classes available online this year are:


● “The Holy Spirit, the Church and the Triune God,” taught by Lois Malcolm, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, Jan. 28-Feb. 25, 2008; and


Registration must be completed a week before each class begins to ensure time for a ‘test run’ of the technology hookups.
What would lead a Turkish Muslim student to Luther Seminary? Why, Google, of course.

Yasir Bilgin will begin his second year in Luther’s Islamic Studies program this fall. Although he lives just minutes away and frequently drove past Luther, it took a Web search for him to discover it.

Bilgin is a native of Bursa, Turkey, a city about three hours southeast of Istanbul. Born into a traditional Islamic family, Bilgin earned an undergraduate degree in theology and started a master’s degree in Qur’an interpretation in Turkey. But a time of self-reflection led him in a different direction. He had a keen interest in other cultures and faiths, thanks in part to his involvement in a movement led by teacher and thinker Fethullah Gülen. A Turkish religious scholar, Gülen won countless followers by encouraging Muslims to embrace such ideals as tolerance and democracy. His message of parental respect and academic achievement had an immediate impact on the then teen-aged Bilgin, who rose to third in his class after joining the movement.

Inspired by Gülen’s call for Turks to introduce their culture to the world, Bilgin put his graduate studies on hold to travel to the United States. After his April 2001 arrival, Bilgin spent time in Pennsylvania, where Gülen now lives and teaches. Two years later, Bilgin moved to Minnesota at the invitation of friends who are graduate students at the University of Minnesota.

Bilgin then decided to take up graduate studies once again, this time looking at psychology programs. While attending a conference of Abrahamic faiths at Hartford Seminary, a student there suggested he attend seminary, where he could gain a religious rather than secular understanding of human beings. “It made sense to me,” he said.

So he began researching his options. His Internet search led him back almost to his own front door. He was surprised to learn that what he thought was a church was actually a seminary. He met with Dr. Mark Swanson, former Associate Professor of Christian History and Islam and Director of the Islamic Studies Program. Bilgin was encouraged to learn that he could incorporate pastoral
Summer 2007

Cross-Cultural Involvement (continued)

care classes into his studies. Despite the obvious religious differences, Bilgin entered Luther’s Master of Arts program in Islamic studies. He was convinced Luther was the right place for him to continue his education.

“Science is a science, regardless of the religious collar on it,” he said.

It’s been a time of discovery for Bilgin. He learned that his fears about “how are [students] going to look at me, how are they going to think of me” were for naught. He’s found that Luther is a good fit for him in more ways than he first realized, noting similarities between Gülen’s teachings and the seminary’s emphasis on cross-cultural education and youth ministry.

But perhaps the most surprising part of the story is that Bilgin served as a chaplain one spring semester. Although not a requirement of the Islamic Studies program, Bilgin participated in a clinical pastoral education program. At first he was uncomfortable talking with and reading the Bible to patients. But as the discomfort waned, his ability “to put myself in other people’s shoes” grew. “It was a really life-changing event for me,” he said.

He especially appreciated one elderly woman, whose depth of faith impressed him. Like many, she saw the events of Sept. 11, 2001, as a divine warning; however, she saw it not as a pronouncement of judgment but as a call to spread the Word. Likewise, Bilgin sees sharing the love of God as the right way to counter terrorism. He quotes his mentor, who says that a terrorist is not a Muslim and a Muslim is not a terrorist.

While not an evangelist in the traditional sense, Bilgin feels called to spread a spiritual message—the message of a tolerant, peaceful Islam.

He hopes to do so by remaining in the United States for the foreseeable future, pursuing a doctorate in counseling or psychology. He plans to continue to serve in the Turkish Muslim community by leading prayers and Qu’ran studies while at the same time fostering inter-religious understanding. He is helped in this effort by his wife, Betul, who is a doctoral biomedical student at the University of Minnesota.

Each religion has its “own personality, own richness,” he said. Islam teaches that God revealed himself through creation and the holy books, as given to the prophets—Adam, Moses, David, Abraham, Jesus and Muhammed.

“Apart from the Qu’ran, Islam is the last and most completed religion in the sight of God,” said Bilgin. Even so, “As a part of our faith, someone should believe that these messengers received the true message from God and they reflected God’s purpose and carried it to human beings in their time,” he said.

The stated purpose of Luther’s Islamic Studies program is to encourage awareness of the Islamic reality and to prepare Christian leaders for meaningful involvement with Muslims.” By attending Luther, Bilgin has provided just such opportunities for those in as well as outside the Islamic Studies program.

“I have had a wonderful time getting to know Yasir,” said Liz Olson, M.A., ’07. “He has been patient as he teaches me of his faith tradition, from sharing his experiences at morning prayer to enjoying Turkish food together.”

Bilgin’s contributions are academic as well as cultural. “Reading the Abraham cycle in Genesis and the kosher and sacrifice laws of Leviticus through Muslim eyes with Yasir was especially rewarding for the unexpected contrasts and comparisons that resulted,” said Mark Throntveit, Professor of Old Testament. He anticipates Bilgin’s presence will occasion “illuminating insights” in the class.

“Greater knowledge of and appreciation for the beliefs, customs, and presuppositions of a variety of traditions invites us to examine our own,” said Throntveit. “As we continue to live in a world of changing if not clashing cultures, we will best be served by taking advantage of opportunities to examine and discuss our differences and similarities whenever possible.”

For Olson, getting acquainted with Bilgin is more than social. It’s caused her to ask, “How can we as Christians better receive those of varying faiths?”

One cannot find the answer to such a question on Google, but rather in “meaningful involvement”—involvement that is possible right here at Luther, thanks to Bilgin’s presence.
J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, 2007 Visiting Schiotz Professor from Trinity Theological Seminary in Ghana, presented a paper on “Religion and Politics in Africa” at the Missions Academy of the University of Hamburg on June 22. The paper examined, from a theological perspective, the contributions of both mainline and Pentecostal churches towards Ghana’s democratic transitions between 1992 and 2004. Although focused on Ghana, the paper referenced parallel developments in other African countries including Zambia, Nigeria and Benin.

Stephen Brookfield has been named as Assessment Consultant for the Western Mission Cluster’s “Making Connections” initiative, a joint effort between Luther Seminary and Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, Calif. This three-year project will study the effectiveness of different approaches to recruiting new seminary students. It is funded by a grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc. Brookfield currently serves as a distinguished professor at the University of St. Thomas in the Twin Cities.

Katie Pence Dahl, Global Mission Institute Assistant Director, and Chenar Howard, GMI Program and Relations Coordinator, joined more than 7,600 educators from 104 countries for the NAFSA: Association of International Educators conference and expo at the Minneapolis Convention Center in May. The conference’s theme was “Preparing Global Citizens.”

Lois Farag, Assistant Professor of Early Church History, will lead a tour of historic early Christian sites in Turkey, following in the footsteps of Paul through Ephesus, Cappadocia, and more, in January 2008. For more information, contact her at lfarag@luthersem.edu.

Craig Koester, ’80, Professor of New Testament, was a scholar-in-residence at the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton, N.J., this past winter and spring. His project was a book on the theology of John’s gospel, which will be published by Eerdmans. In April, he gave a presentation on “The Church and Its Witness in the Apocalypse of John” at the Norwegian School of Theology in Oslo.

Frieder Ludwig, Associate Professor of Mission and World Christianity and Director of the Global Mission Institute, and Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Schiotz Visiting Professor, organized an international conference on “African Christianity and the Neo-Diaspora” which was held at Luther Seminary in March. One of the conference’s objectives was to discover how African immigrant churches are developing in the United States. It was funded by a grant from the Louisville Institute.

Alvin Luedke, Associate Professor of Rural Ministry, attended the Small Town and Rural (STaR) Ministry Alliance national meeting at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minn., in June, and the International Rural Church Association Conference in Manitoba in July.

Alan Padgett, Professor of Systematic Theology, was invited to attend the first Open Theology and Science Seminar hosted by Eastern Nazarene College in Quincy, Mass. in June. The seminar aims to bring together theologians and scientists for discussion surrounding the issues of cosmology, biology and human sciences as they relate to theology.

Faculty News (continued)

The book is part of the Harvard Theological Studies series.

Mary Hinkle Shore, Associate Professor of New Testament, will take part in a consultation on “Spiritual Formation in Theological Distance Education,” a project hosted by Erskine Theological Seminary and funded by the Wabash Center, over the next three years.

Gary Simpson, Professor of Systematic Theology, wrote “War, Peace and God: A Lutheran Unified Approach,” a new book in the Lutheran Voices series that will be published in September (2007, Fortress Press). In January 2008, he will be leading a 16-day tour of the Holy Land as part of the Western Mission Cluster’s Contextual Leadership Initiative.

Hal Weldin, Coordinator of the Master of Arts in Youth and Family Ministry Distributed Learning Program, was the featured speaker at a retreat for youth ministers sponsored by the Northern Rockies Institute of Theology at Christikon in Montana in June. He also delivered the keynote presentation at the Minneapolis Area Synod assembly in June.

Debra J. Wells, ’93, Ecumenical Coordinator, attended the 50th anniversary meeting of the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches USA. The event was held at Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio. The theologians and religious leaders in attendance assessed the previous 50 years of the ecumenical movement in the United States and addressed the future of ecumenism in the 21st century.

Coming to a Town Near You

Terence Fretheim, ’60, Elva B. Lovell Professor of Old Testament, will speak to synod pastors in Western North Dakota on Sept. 9-10, and in Western Iowa on Sept. 23-24. He will also be speaking on the God of the Old Testament at the Ashland Theological Seminary Convocation, Ashland, Ohio, Oct. 23-24.

Gary Simpson, Professor of Systematic Theology, will give two keynote presentations at the Lakeside Theological Conference, sponsored by the Northwest Ohio Synod and Trinity Lutheran Seminary, on Sept. 4-6 at Lakeside, Ohio. He will be speaking on themes from Martin Luther and Dietrich Bonhoeffer that are germane to contemporary questions of the church in American public life.

Karoline Lewis Joins Faculty

Karoline Lewis joined the Luther Seminary faculty on July 1 as an assistant professor of preaching. “With a New Testament degree from Emory, rich pastoral experience, and a commitment to strengthening the church’s proclamation, Karoline adds depth and breadth to Luther’s emphasis on biblical preaching,” said David Lose, Academic Dean and Professor of Biblical Preaching.

“It’s very much a calling to be back in the Luther community,” said Lewis, who attended Luther at the same time as her sister and mother. “Those years at Luther were a very important part of my life and returning to Luther is an opportunity to give back to the community,” she said.

Lewis brings a long family history to her new role. Her mother, husband, father, a sister, a brother-in-law, her uncle and a cousin graduated from Luther Seminary.

“This particular position is very exciting for me because I feel a strong sense of call to be in a situation where I am integrating the life of the church with the Bible,” said Lewis. “I am committed to helping congregations see their lives through the lens of the biblical text,” she explained. “I’m also very interested in the state of preaching in the larger church and how we might improve on and bring high quality to that preaching.”

Lewis has been serving as an adjunct faculty member in the religion department at Augsburg College in Minneapolis since 2003. She also served as an adjunct faculty member at Luther Seminary in the spring and fall of 2006. Lewis has a doctorate in New Testament, with outside emphases in Homiletics and Old Testament, from Emory University in Atlanta, Ga. She earned a Master of Divinity degree from Luther Seminary and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill. She has contracted with Peter Lang Publishing to publish her book, ‘Rereading the “Shepherd Discourse’ Back Into the Fourth Gospel.”
The ‘00s

Christopher Hawkins, ’05, and his wife, Renee, are proud to announce the birth of their son, Nathan James, born on May 30.

Scott McAnally, ’04, and his wife, Jen, announce the birth of their son, Stephen Richard, born on May 3. McAnally also has been accepted to begin a Doctorate of Ministry program at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

Kathryn Reid Walker, ’03, was ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA) on March 25. Reid Walker is currently serving as Interim Minister at St. Paul’s UCC in Erin, Wis.

Amanda Olson de Castillo, ’03, was ordained into the Augustinian Lutheran Church of Guatemala at the St. Paul Area Synod assembly in June.

The ‘90s

Erika Nilsen, ’95, is the author “The Blessing of Feelings,” a children’s book of black-and-white photographs that captures a wide range of feelings, which allows children to engage in conversation about feelings and how they can be handled in a healthy manner. Nilsen is currently a pastor in Baxter, Minn.

Victor Eduardo Jortack, ’93, has been called to serve Zwingli United Church of Christ in Berne, Minn. The Service of Installation was June 3. He is married to H. Graciela Jortack, ’95.

David Fenrick, ’94, received his Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies from the E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission, Asbury Theological Seminary, Orlando, Fla.

Andre Heuer, ’93, received a Human Rights Fellowship from the University of Minnesota Human Rights Center, Minneapolis, to begin work in fall 2007 at the Center for Victims of Torture Healing Center in Voinjama, Liberia. He will be providing mental health services and collecting the stories of returning refugees, internally displaced people and local community members who have suffered the devastating effects of war and torture during the country’s 14-year civil war.

The ‘70s

Dean Johnson, ’73, former Minnesota Senate Majority Leader, was sworn in as a member of the University of Minnesota Board of Regents. He was elected to a four-year term in April on the university’s 12-member governing body by the Minnesota Legislature.

Think About Reunions

It’s time to think about reunions! Each year at our Mid-Winter Convocation in January, we invite alumni/ae to reconnect and celebrate their time at Luther Seminary or one of its predecessor seminaries. This January, the classes of 1963, 1968, 1983, 1998, 2003 and 2007 will have reunion celebrations on Thursday, Jan. 10, 2008. If members of the classes of 1973 or 1978 would like to organize a reunion, please contact Lynne Moratzka at 651-641-3419 or lmoratzk@luthersem.edu.

Mark your calendar now! Watch for upcoming information on www.luthersem.edu/reunion.
Luther Seminary Elects New Board Directors, Trustees and Committee Members

Two new members have been appointed to the Luther Seminary board of directors for a four-year term, Beth Lewis, CEO of Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, and Bob Torkelson, retired executive, Excelsior, Minn. They join 22 other directors on the Luther Seminary board.

The board also elected three members as officers of the board. Paul Dovre, (President Emeritus, Concordia College, Moorhead, Minn.) was named Chair of the Board; David Hayes, (Attorney, Half Moon Bay, Calif.), was named Vice Chair and Anne Andert, (Parish Pastor, Benson, Minn.), was named Secretary. In addition, the board elected the following committee chairs: Jim Lindus, academic affairs; Rick Foss, student services; Bob Torkelson, administration and finance, and Janet Anderson, seminary relations.

The new member of the board of trustees is Ed Hawxhurst (International Accounting Executive, Kirland, Wash.). Officers of the board of trustees are: Chair – Janet Anderson (Church and Civic Leader, Minneapolis, Minn.); Vice Chair – Gordon Sprenger (Retired Health Care Executive, Edina, Minn.), and Secretary – Michael Schwartz (Attorney, Bloomington, Minn.).

Did you know?

Did you know that many talented Lutheran students are choosing to attend non-Lutheran seminaries because they receive more financial aid from those schools which have larger endowments?

What readers say about...

I do enjoy the God Pause messages. They are so pertinent!

I like them so much, I frequently forward them to others.

I value this devotion very much and need it every day!

I appreciate receiving the God Pause daily...it is one of the many tools I use for personal devotions.

I've found your connections to the scriptures to be thought-provoking — maybe even action-provoking!
Filling the Stewardship Education Gap

By Maria Thompson, Director of Communication

Stewardship is the management of life with Christ at the center," said Pastor Glenn Taibl, Pastor and former Philanthropic Advisor at Luther Seminary, who led the seminary’s stewardship education program from its beginnings in 2000. "Luther Seminary’s mission statement says that we educate leaders for Christian communities and I think that stewardship is an important part of that."

Congregations expect pastors to be strong stewardship leaders. Stewardship must be learned, however. Good stewardship leadership can help a congregation thrive. “What pastors do serves as a model and can encourage others,” said Jerry Hoffman, Pastor and Director of the Center for Stewardship Leadership. “And it’s not just about money. All we have is from God. We are entrusted with it—food, our bodies, opportunities, gifts, money. How we respond to that is a spiritual issue.”

Luther Seminary’s stewardship education programs are helping Christian leaders become good stewards of money, time, volunteers and other assets. The depth and breadth of Luther’s commitment to stewardship education is unique within the ELCA and perhaps even more widely. The personal finance coaching program, in particular, gained recognition when it was featured in Smart Money Magazine in December 2006.

Financial Coaching

“Seminary students are not that different from other people their age,” said Hoffman, noting that they often have a high degree of debt and aren’t sure how to handle their finances. To address this, the seminary offers personal financial coaching for students. Currently, 45 volunteer coaches from outside the seminary work one-on-one serving 61 students. The coaches help students to be faithful stewards, practice generosity, develop healthy money habits and exercise financial intelligence in managing their money. (The coaches do not provide financial advice or monetary support.)

In addition to coaching, the seminary also offers students a “Healthy Financial Habits for Seminarians” workshop in the fall and a “Running On Empty” workshop in March, along with a Good Sense budgeting course.

Generosity Awareness

In addition to these efforts, the seminary also teaches students about generosity—something that, like good stewardship—doesn’t always come naturally. The seminary works to place students in situations where they learn generosity and what it means to be focused outward. One example is the Blessings Squared event which gives scholarship recipients and the donors who sponsor them time to share a meal and worship.

Continuing Education

Once in congregations and communities, graduates can take advantage of a number of educational opportunities in stewardship offered by Luther Seminary. This includes working one-on-one in self-study, enrolling in continuing education classes through the seminary’s Kairos program and using the extremely popular Stewardship in the 21st Century Web site (www.luthersem.edu/stewardship).

Stewardship in the 21st Century

The stewardship Web site is designed to connect individuals and congregations to resources that develop their call to stewardship. It includes a variety of free stewardship-related resources including sermons, book reviews and a weekly e-mail newsletter. The site also offers Living in Abundance materials written by Luther Seminary professors for stewardship education in congregations.
“We have been blessed with generous donors—themselves good stewards—who have invested in stewardship education at Luther Seminary,” said Kathy Hansen, Vice President for Seminary Relations. “They understand that their gifts can be multiplied by helping to educate students at Luther Seminary who will graduate and serve congregations, touching thousands of lives throughout their ministries. Think of the impact this stewardship education program will have throughout the church!”

Luther Seminary’s work in stewardship education began nearly 20 years ago with a gift that allowed the seminary to create The Stewardship Council, which provided regular workshops on stewardship for students. In 2000, the program took another leap forward with a gift of $200,000, allowing the seminary to sponsor a major stewardship education event for recent Master of Divinity graduates and their spouses. In subsequent years, donors have added to the fund. Recently, a couple who wishes to remain anonymous pledged to match $1.25 million in gifts, provided that $1.25 million is raised from other donors. Luther Seminary must raise the matching gifts by Dec. 31, 2007. When combined with existing stewardship funds, the seminary will have a permanent $3 million endowment to support ongoing stewardship education.

What you can do: Explore the stewardship Web site (www.luthersem.edu/stewardship)—sign up for free weekly e-mail newsletter, and find many educational and motivational resources such as Web links, presentations and books for recommended reading. We also invite you to contribute your ideas and resources. Contact Jerry Hoffman at jhoffman@luthrsem.edu or at 651-641-3448 or 612-788-1300.

We also invite you to make a gift in support of Luther Seminary’s stewardship education programs! Your gift, made by Dec. 31, will be matched dollar for dollar. Make a gift at www.luthersem.edu/gifts.

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Like Daughter Like Mother, Like Father Like Son

By Andrew Behrendt, M.Div. Jr.

Students commonly follow their parents in attending Luther Seminary. Kate Schruba and her mother, Tryphine, and Carl Fiskness and his dad, Alton, though, have had the more unusual experience of walking the seminary halls side by side.

Kate’s call to ordained ministry came sooner than her mother’s, a pastor’s wife and former bank officer from Caroline, Wis. But when Lay School classes weren’t enough to satisfy her growing desire to minister, Tryphine started at Luther first, in fall 2005. While bringing some challenges, the Schrubas’ past year together as Master of Divinity students also deepened their relationship.

At 23, Kate struggled during the first semester class she and her mother shared. “She wanted to sit next to me, and that awkwardness was definitely showing there. I had a friend who I made sit in between us,” she said. “But after that semester, I think we got a lot closer, actually, probably closer than we’ve ever been.”

If anything, it’s just a mother’s sweetness—specifically, Tryphine’s regular gifts of chocolate to Kate’s friends—that is sometimes tough to swallow. “She only gives out chocolate to guys, and they’re my guy friends,” said Kate, adding with a laugh, “I don’t know if she’s trying to gain suitors for me or what.”

Of course, Kate hasn’t always made things easy for her mom. “You worry about embarrassing your kids,” said Tryphine. “But then on my birthday in April, before chapel, she’s calling out to everybody that she sees: ‘Today’s my mom’s birthday! Today’s my mom’s birthday!’ So she got to embarrass me. At least she didn’t say, ‘My mom’s 58 today!’”

Alton Fiskness, 65, a Vietnam veteran from New London, Minn., started attending Luther before his son was born. A seminary stint in 1975 ended when he longed to continue teaching high school. In 1997, he began regularly commuting to classes again, and, undeterred by Parkinson’s disease, earned a Master of Arts degree in Church History in 2003. In 2008, he expects to replace his M.A. with a Master of Divinity degree and serve as a fill-in pastor.

Carl, who planned a career in the ministry for most of his life, began at Luther in spring 2003, just after college graduation. He credits his father for ushering him into classes and campus housing.

“I was a lot less nervous coming—I knew basically what to expect when I came in here,” recalled Carl, 28, who easily shared campus with his dad. “I could hear some people saying something like, ‘Oh, it would have sort of tainted my experience or not made it my own.’ But I don’t feel like that at all. I feel like I did my own thing here.”

A 2007 M.Div. graduate now seeking a call in northeastern Minnesota, Carl loved sharing several classes with his dad (who embarrassed him little even as his high school sex education teacher), and they regularly sat together in lectures.

“I’ve enjoyed that—we can sit and rap together about courses and curriculum and classes and issues,” added Alton, not the least bit bitter about his son beating him to the M.Div. degree. “I’m very proud, and I know it’s going to be a lot of work because I know how demanding the job of a minister is. But I hope that I can get a chance to rap with him again, and we’ll share ideas and sort out things.”

While the Fisknesses enjoyed several years together at Luther, the Schrubas, due to internships, won’t share the campus beyond 2006-07. Both mother and daughter will miss their time as classmates. “It’s kind of fun,” said Tryphine. “I’m giving her a hug in the Olson Campus Center and there are people walking by, they’ll go, ‘Oh, I wish my mom was here.’”

“I’m going to miss it a lot, actually,” said Kate. “She is my mom, but at the same time, she is my close friend.”

Kate (left), and her mother, Tryphine Schruba, studied together as Master of Divinity students this past year.

Alton, (left) and Carl Fiskness, studied together at the seminary until Carl graduated this past spring.
Congregation Worships Without Borders

By Andrew Behrendt, M.Div. Jr.

If Sean Whelan and his parishioners at North Emanuel Lutheran Church had stuck to their comfortable Sunday routine, they would have all spent the morning of March 25 in their sanctuary in northern St. Paul, Minn. Instead, they found themselves standing in the street outside a nearby home—a crime scene where three people had been killed two mornings earlier—and worshiping with members of the victims’ families.

“I watched a congregation that essentially is comprised of very custom-oriented people gathering around these strangers and sharing the peace with them, supporting them and telling them that they would pray for them,” recalled Whelan, a Master of Divinity intern, who had organized the service. “I’m watching stoic, very emotionally unexpressive, proud Scandinavian Lutherans crack in this tremendous outpouring of support for the family.”

That morning, North Emanuel congregation members embraced God’s calling despite their own nature and routines. Whelan, 38, originally from northwestern Wisconsin, already knew something about that. Were he not struck by a round of layoffs in early 2003, he said, he would have preferred 20 more years as an airline mechanic to the life of a pastor. Accepting God’s call amid the turbulence, he attended Luther Seminary for three years before being stationed last fall at North Emanuel, an urban, aging congregation that otherwise has no pastor.

It was the morning of Friday, March 23, that a 32-year-old woman, her 31-year-old fiancé and her 15-year-old daughter were fatally shot inside their St. Paul home. The woman’s other two children, ages 7 and 10, said gunmen had broken into the home and demanded money before killing the three. A motive remains unclear, and authorities have made no arrests.

Upon learning that relatives of the victims once attended North Emanuel and that just the morning before, they had observed the burial of the slain woman’s grandmother, Whelan considered how the congregation might process to the site of the murders. He sought simply a showing of solidarity rather than a publicity stunt. “It just didn’t seem right to me to participate in the regular routine on Sunday when something so tragic had happened so close to where we were gathering to worship,” he said.

St. Paul Area Synod Bishop Peter Rogness agreed on short notice to join the effort, and on Sunday morning, Whelan explained to his parishioners what he hoped for them to do. Without any of the grumbling he almost expected, roughly 40 of the congregation’s more able-bodied members got up just before the gospel acclamation and silently walked single-file for three blocks to the cordoned-off home. Members of the victims’ families, having seen the procession, had gathered there. When Whelan explained the church’s intent, the male victim’s mother broke down in tears.

“It was sort of a surreal experience up until I looked into the face of a mother whose son had just been murdered in cold blood, crying because she was happy that a church showed up to worship in front of the house,” said Whelan, noting that the 7- and 10-year-old children who had lost their mother and sister were also there.

Standing on the curb and clinging to a processional cross to keep his emotions in check, Whalen led the service of Scripture-reading, song, creed and prayers as others from the neighborhood gathered with them. After about 30 minutes, the congregation processed back to conclude the service with those remaining in the sanctuary.

Whelan then phoned the slain woman’s mother, who had until recently been an active member at North Emanuel. They arranged for a private family service at North Emanuel later that day. The woman and her family, numbering about 20 people, have worshiped regularly with the small congregation ever since. Some have been baptized, and a wedding is coming soon.

Whelan, due to graduate in 2008, will serve North Emanuel for another year as a resident pastor. He notes great pride in his parishioners for their actions that morning, as well as great inspiration from the family that has joined them. Above all, he hopes the experience will flower into greater willingness for mission.

“People aren’t going to get murdered every week in this neighborhood, but there are families in dire need of an intervention by a community of faith making a statement publicly that says, ‘We stand with you, regardless of how you think of yourself in light of the church,’” said Whelan. “It’s a wonderful transition into what God is really calling this congregation into now.”●
Upcoming Kairos Courses
For more information about any of the Kairos courses listed below, go to www.luthersem.edu/kairos.

STORY Summer 2007

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Burgess Lecture**
Oct. 10
10 a.m.
Chapel of the Incarnation

The Rev. Wanda Deifelt, Professor of Religion, from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, will speak on “The Quotidian and the Mission of the Church: Saving Souls, Feeding Bodies, Healing Lives” at the annual Burgess Lecture. The Burgess lectures are designed to interpret today’s global mission in light of the Christian tradition, the historical experience of the church and the contemporary situation in the world. For more information, go to www.luthersem.edu/lectures/burgess/.

**Word & World Lecture**
Nov. 7
11 a.m.
Chapel of the Incarnation

Dr. Mark I. Wallace is Professor of Religion and a member of the Interpretation Theory and Environmental Studies Committees at Swarthmore College in Swarthmore, Penn., he will discuss “The New Green Christianity: Why the Church is Vital to Saving the Earth,” at the annual Word & World lecture. Sponsored by Word & World, a scholarly theological journal published by Luther Seminary, the lectures address topics important to Christian ministry in today’s world. For more information, go to www.luthersem.edu/lectures/wordworld/.

**Ventures in Vocation**
Oct. 7-8

Ventures in Vocation allows post-college professionals and college-age students to discuss call and vocation with church leaders and other conference participants. They will explore their own sense of call, their gifts and the possibility of church ministry. Attendees also are immersed in seminary life through class visits, morning chapel, discussions with faculty and students and other activities. For more information, go to www.luthersem.edu/admissions/ventures.

**The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry**
Oct. 1-3

Back by popular demand! The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry Kairos course is an opportunity to engage the findings of the Exemplary Youth Ministry study of seven denominations around exemplary youth ministry practices.

**Leadership Package: Building Intentional Leadership Skills and Leading Within Adversity**
Oct. 3-5

- Building Intentional Leadership Skills: This course in pastoral leadership is for pastors and church leaders seeking to strengthen their skills in congregational leadership.
- Leading Within Adversity: Take a fresh look at how our theological tradition serves as a foundation and resource for facing adversity. Learn to employ a research-based approach and skill set to handle each difficulty, demand and challenge with grace, clarity and fluidity.

**The Vocationally Aware Missional Church**
Oct. 15-18

Luther Seminary faculty offer biblical and theological rationale for becoming a vocationally aware missional congregation, including: the work of the Holy Spirit in our vocations, radical evangelism—getting to the root of proclaiming the Gospel, and the biblical basis for vocation from Paul’s letters.
When asked about the connection between pitching for a minor-league baseball team and going to seminary, Charlie Ruud answers like a good Lutheran: It’s all about vocation.

“When I’m throwing, I’m serving as a baseball player,” said Ruud, a pitcher for the St. Paul Saints who just completed his middler year as a master of divinity student at Luther Seminary. “I’m using the gifts God gave me. I try to do that in a godly way, by loving my neighbor and all that.”

So can one love one’s neighbor and still try and strike him out? Ruud doesn’t see a contradiction. “Of course I get mad at myself if someone hits a three-run homer off me,” he said, “but mostly, I love the game. That’s what keeps me playing.”

His passion for baseball also has kept him serving as a pitching coach at St. Olaf, which makes his spring schedule a little hectic. But he’s been thankful for understanding professors and a flexible class schedule that accommodates the many games and practices he attends. And, he’s been blessed with the support of his wife, Becky, who teaches junior-high Spanish and also coaches cross country and track.

This fall that schedule will change as he starts his internship year. He’ll be at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, and though he’s never served in a campus ministry setting, he feels excited about connecting with college-age students as they struggle with new freedom and opportunities.

“Coming from coaching at St. Olaf, I know how hard it is for people in that age bracket. They’re forced to ask themselves, ‘what does faith mean to me, apart from Mom or Dad or friends or church back home?’ I remember the pressures of college. And I’m looking forward to helping them get their lives figured out.

One thing’s for sure: whether throwing a fastball or preaching the gospel, Ruud will be true to his vocation.
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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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