Three approaches, one mission

Three Twin Cities-area congregations rethink church

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World Canvas Project
A colorful worldwide art project starts at Luther
Luther Seminary educates leaders for Christian communities + called and sent by the Holy Spirit + to witness to salvation through Jesus Christ + and to serve in God’s world.

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Cover image: A member of the Luther Seminary community paints a square on the World Canvas Project. © Stephen Holm
WINTER CONTENTS

Multicolored Ministry

Welcome to the new Story magazine! We'll still bring you engaging stories about what students, faculty, alums and our community at Luther Seminary are doing for the sake of God's world, but in a fresh and vivid way. These changes mirror those you'll see when you stop by campus or visit www.luthersem.edu. We hope you enjoy the exciting changes at The Story and Luther Seminary.

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www.luthersem.edu
Moved by the Promise . . . into specialized ministries

“As the first decade of the 21st century comes to a close, we confess that the Holy Spirit is calling and sending the church of Jesus Christ into apostolic mission for the sake of God’s world.” So begins Luther Seminary’s strategic plan. The heart of this strategic plan is Luther Seminary’s mission statement—first formulated in 1995—that emphasizes the education of leaders for Christian ministry.

“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.”

But who are these leaders? And what kinds of ministries do they perform after graduation? Herein lies a fascinating—and often untold—story of the diverse kinds of leadership being formed at Luther Seminary. The total number of students this year at Luther Seminary is 814; about half of these are preparing for pastoral ministry. The majority of the remaining students are being equipped for all sorts of diverse ministries. Here is an example of these specialized ministries:

- Interim Ministers
- Evangelists
- Parish Nurses
- Diaconal Ministers
- Synodically Authorized Ministers
- Children, Youth and Family Leaders
- Music and Choir Leaders
- Social Workers and Pastoral Ministers
- Chaplains (Military & Hospital)
- Associates in Ministry
- Teachers, Professors
- Catechists

In Ephesians 4: 7–13, the diversity of specialized ministries is lifted up in a powerful way.

“But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift. . . . The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.”

Our mission isn’t in recession. God’s promise in Christ compels us! Yes, we are Moved by the Promise to go into ministry, and, as this report highlights, many of these ministries are special, requiring unique gifts and unique leaders. Keep these leaders in your prayers as they follow the Spirit into exciting arenas of God’s work in the world.

Pax,

Rick Bliese
Celebration of Biblical Preaching inspires participants to be better preachers

Hundreds gathered on campus Oct. 5–7 for the first annual Celebration of Biblical Preaching—three days of sermons, keynote addresses and workshops focused on the craft of biblical preaching.

Plenary presenters both taught and preached, giving participants tools as well as examples of true biblical preaching. Plenaries were given by:

• Anna Carter Florence, associate professor of preaching and worship, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Ga.
• Thomas G. Long, Bandy Professor of Preaching, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta
• Otis Moss Jr., pastor emeritus, Olivet Institutional Baptist Church, Cleveland
• Haddon Robinson, Harold John Ockenga Distinguished Professor of Preaching, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Mass.

Here is what participants had to say about the event:

"Thank you for bringing such gifted people together to share and to help us strengthen our courage for preaching."

"It was inspiring and also offered tools that I could immediately use to improve my preaching."

"I will be a better preacher because of these three days."

"I think this was the most valuable continuing education course I have ever taken. Truly! I came home feeling so refreshed and ready to preach up a storm!"

To see more photos of this year’s event, visit www.flickr.com/photos/lutherseminary, choose Sets, and then choose 2009 Celebration of Biblical Preaching.

Mark your calendar for next year’s Celebration, Oct. 4–6, 2010. For speaker information, visit www.luthersem.edu/celebration, where you can also view video from the 2009 event.
How are we to be church in these times? Luther Seminary’s Children, Youth and Family Ministry degree programs are exploring that question.

Two congregations agreeing to an experiment are sharply different: a 2,000-member parish in St. Louis Park, Minn., and, six miles distant, a 200-member inner-city church in north Minneapolis.

Anthony Fair and Keith Long, both Master of Divinity middlers and interns at the congregations, are the keys.

“Where is God working?” Fair asks. “Where can I help today?”

Long adds advice derived from the Apostle Paul: “Be all things to all people.”

Not much of a job description, is it? “They’ve had to be self-starters,” acknowledges Terri Elton, director of Luther’s Center for Children, Youth and Family Ministry. “We haven’t told them what to do.”

Yet with guidance from Elton and others at Luther, and from pastors at both churches, Fair and Long are making the arrangement work. Luther seminarians in Children, Youth and Family Ministry routinely get 20-month internships at one congregation. Fair and Long agreed to 10 months at each—and then, a trade.

Redeemer Lutheran Church in Minneapolis and Westwood Lutheran Church in adjacent St. Louis Park have a long-standing relationship, including joint youth activities. Yet the swap was a stretch.

Fair and Long themselves come from markedly different backgrounds. Fair, 47, a Marine veteran of the first Gulf War who grew up in New York City as a Roman Catholic, has worked as a singer, actor and dancer. Long, 30, grew up in St. Anthony Village, a Minneapolis suburb, and has a decade’s experience in youth ministry.

What they have in common, though, is a skill for video. So as they set out on this odd mission, they decided to use it.

Fair started at Redeemer, Long at Westwood. An early joint video project worked well. At a Wisconsin autumn youth retreat in 2008—an event the two congregations had done together before—Fair and Long helped participants create video presentations showing young people’s takes on a Bible study.

Other video projects faltered, however. Long says he and Fair have learned
not to “assign” such projects to young people but instead to watch for kids who express interest—and who then can draw their peers into the project.

Luther Seminary’s Children, Youth and Family Ministry program will keep experimenting with such staff-sharing models—and one such model may eventually work at your own church.

Fair and Long get praise from the Rev. Kelly Chatman of Redeemer, who calls the swap a “transformational vision for ministry.” The Rev. Jason Van Hunnik, associate pastor at Westwood, agrees. The two churches “have a lot to learn from each other,” says Van Hunnik. Fair and Long are “helping to move that along.”

The context is fluid: Westwood was in a youth-director interim as Long arrived. When Fair joined the staff, Redeemer was expanding its youth ministry in cooperation with four other north Minneapolis congregations to encourage young people in regular worship and Bible study and to help them find jobs and develop leadership skills.

Fair, Pastor Chatman notes, organized an intergenerational Easter vigil with hip-hop as well as traditional music. Long is developing a Web site to promote youth ministry in the Minneapolis collaborative.

Chatman says another blessing on which Fair and Long have worked is combined confirmation events—including training and leadership in video, a confirmation retreat, a youth gathering and a banquet focusing on shared identity for youth ministry between the churches.

So how shall we be church? Such partnering may be the way—“sharing staff, overlapping ministries. Not saying ‘our church has to do everything on its own.’ This could be a way,” says Elton, “to be church in the future.”
Three approaches, one shared service mission

By Melanie Boulay Becker, Correspondent
JACOB’S WELL

JACOB’S WELL

Jacob’s Well provides a home for people who had given up on God, faith and the church, says Pastor Greg Meyer. “They are now connecting and finding that God is impacting their lives.”

Formed in the shadow of nearby Bethlehem Lutheran, Jacob’s Well was originally created to serve those not reached by Bethlehem. “Our combination of Lutheran core theology, without a lot of the traditional practices of Lutheran congregations, makes us ‘look’ a lot different, but we are very compatible in mission,” says Meyer, who took classes toward a Master of Theology degree at Luther.

Just about everything might surprise those accustomed to more traditional worship, including the lack of a formal liturgy, the non-traditional building, the music, the nature of the sermons, the use of multimedia, the predominance of young people in an urban congregation and the casual nature of the community.

Meyer believes Jacob’s Well reaches some people more effectively than a traditional church. “The inherent cultural momentum in traditional churches distances them from people who have ‘checked out’ of church,” he says.

“We take incarnation very seriously and meet people where they are with music, learning styles, concepts of commitment and real-life needs,” he says. Jacob’s Well is committed to using public buildings for worship. Meyer reports that this reaches some people wary of the institutional aspects of traditional church. “We want to be the church, not have a church.”

BY THE NUMBERS: JACOB’S WELL

• Attendance: Averages 220, recently topped 300
• Founded: September 2006 with 42 people
• How fast is it growing? Outgrowing current space. Needs to add a second Sunday morning service to increase seating capacity and allow growth, and a second worship site, targeted for March 2010, to better reach the surrounding community
• Major liturgy/worship service of the week: Sunday, 10:30 a.m., Field Middle School, 4645 Fourth Ave. S., Minneapolis, with children’s service running simultaneously
• Cultural breakdown: 90 percent white; other 10 percent largely African-American
• Draws from: 80 percent urban (within 10-minute drive), 20 percent farther out
• Brick-and-mortar location: Committed to using public spaces for worship; uses Field Middle School and the Urban Hub (Fourth and Lake streets) in Minneapolis; also Minnehaha Falls Bandstand in the summer.
• Online: www.jacobs-well.net; Facebook: Jacob’s Well Minneapolis; Twitter: www.twubs.com/jacobswell

MERCY SEAT

Mercy Seat serves the “former church kids of the Lutheran and evangelical traditions who now live in the urban core,” says Pastor Kae Evensen, ’95. “Our ministry is unique because we share the ‘do it yourself’ ethos with emerging churches, yet we lead with a radical, grace-based, Trinitarian-theology-of-the-cross message rather than attempts to be ‘relevant’,” says fellow Pastor Mark Stenberg.
Although deeply traditional and Lutheran in theology, Mercy Seat does not have the committee structures or membership guidelines that most Lutheran churches require.

"Although we do not try to soften or dumb down the Christian message, we are playful and full of grace," says Stenberg. The church uses a unique approach to liturgy, commissioning community members and non-members to write, compose and perform original liturgies based on the traditional settings of the mass.

Evensen and Stenberg believe that church is changing because the world is changing. "While we want to retain what is most compelling and heartbreaking about our faith and its rich traditions, we know that thoughtful people will not tolerate pointless meetings or messages that are merely platitudes," says Evensen.

"If they are willing to give their time and money to a church, it must, in some way, break open their lives and provide a message of mercy, grace and hope rooted in the promises of Christ," says Stenberg. "We hope Mercy Seat achieves that."

**BY THE NUMBERS: MERCY SEAT**

- **Attendance:** Averages 100 a week
- **Founded:** March 2006
- **Major liturgy/worship service of the week:** 5 p.m. Sundays
- **Cultural breakdown:** 90 percent white, college-educated, Lutheran and evangelical refugees rediscovering their faith in a critical-thinking context
- **Draws from:** Mostly Minneapolis or St. Paul proper
- **Bricks-and-mortar location:** 724 Lowry Ave. NE, Minneapolis
- **Online:** www.nemercy.org or www.sacralicious.org

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**SPIRIT OF CHRIST COMMUNITY**

Pastors Wes Syverson, ’74, and Kevin Bergeson, ’07, describe Spirit of Christ (SOC) as Garrison Keillor with jalapenos. "We may look and smell Lutheran, but we are provocatively adding doses of new, mission-minded DNA into our way of being church," says Bergeson.

Two smaller congregations (Ascension and First Lutheran), united in passion for shared social-action ministry, consolidated to form SOC. They have since joined area congregations in a shared social-action ministry called Spark, a collaboration they consider crucial to truly being the body of Christ, says Syverson.

The church pursues interfaith relationships, touring area synagogues, serving at the local food pantry and hosting social-justice conversations. "With Minneapolis’ history of Jewish-Christian backgrounds, we’re building bridges with a new generation that is curious, respectful and willing to learn about the deeply intertwined faith traditions to minister to our community together," says Syverson.

They shocked their neighbors by showing up at the community barbeque. "Now we partner in hosting the event," says Bergeson, explaining that "most churches don’t realize they are completely invisible to their community. Being present, being visible, is essential." Syverson and Bergeson credit both the Holy Spirit and members’ roles in making the new church possible.

"Our new ministry would not exist had it not been for the Holy Spirit moving in the hearts of the people..."
in the pews here,” says Syverson. Adds Bergeson, “It was their leadership and seeing something different that made this possible. As pastors, we helped, but in the end, local leaders willing to risk for the sake of the gospel made us fly.”

Syverson and Bergeson believe there is no longer one traditional ministry. “I am inspired by Jacob’s Well and Mercy Seat because they are willing to take risks regardless of what has preceded them in models of Christian community,” says Bergeson. “It reminds me that churches must be willing to thoughtfully engage those who have given up on church but not Jesus.”

Tell Us About Your Unique Ministry!
Do you work in a unique context? Are you amazed at the different ways the Lord uses your talents for ministry on a daily basis? We want to hear your story! You may even see it told in an issue of E-lert or Story magazine. Send your story, or that of another Luther alum you know, to Kelsey Holm at kholm001@luthersem.edu.

BY THE NUMBERS:
SPIRIT OF CHRIST COMMUNITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

- Attendance: More than 100 each Sunday
- Founded: Pentecost, May 2009; churches that formed Spirit of Christ Community Church were started in 1924 and 1955
- How fast is it growing? 15 percent in two years
- Major liturgy/worship service of the week: Sunday at 10 a.m. with a Sunday Pause informal/conversational worship at 7 p.m.
- Cultural breakdown: 90 percent white, 10 percent multiracial
- Draws from: 70 percent first-ring suburban, 20 percent exurbs, 10 percent urban
- Bricks and mortar location: 5801 Minnetonka Blvd., St. Louis Park, Minn.
- Online: www.spiritofchristcommunity.org
Lutherans can find God in a multitude of places. For Tyler Beane, a first-year M.A. student in systematic theology at Luther Seminary, God works through film.

"The first time I felt a deeper connection to my faith occurred in a non-traditional way: while watching the film 'Contact' when I was 13 years old," recalls Beane. "Near the end of the story, Jodie Foster’s character is overwhelmed with awe and the realization that we are not alone. That was how I felt watching this film, that I was not alone."

Since then, Beane’s faith and understanding of God have been closely tied to film. When he entered St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minn., Beane’s adviser encouraged him to connect his two interests. By his senior year, Beane had written several papers on theology in film and established contacts outside of the college to assist in his studies. It was also in college that he discovered that the study of film and theology was a growing academic field, with numerous scholars researching movies’ religious undertones. Beane co-led the St. Olaf Film Club, which gave him the space to hold open conversations on religion in film. He eventually led a faith-and-film series in 2008 at Holden Village in Washington, at which people candidly discussed faith issues in the films. Current Luther Seminary professor Christian Scharen and his wife, Sonja Bataelden, coordinated the program that summer.

After nearly two years of considering graduate school, Beane decided to focus his study on theology while connecting it to film whenever possible. And that led him to Luther Seminary.

“Although Luther does not do much with film specifically, I found that the people I was talking to at Luther were very open to me exploring these interdisciplinary interests of mine,” Beane says. “So here I am.”

Beane is pursuing an independent study in science fiction, film and theology this spring and plans to eventually focus his thesis on the power of film. In addition to his studies at Luther Seminary, he attends classes at the United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities through its Theology and the Arts program. Beane particularly appreciates the classroom experiences and the openness of discussion at both seminaries.

“One of my favorite parts of grad school is that my classes all connect more explicitly than they ever did in college,” he says. “I’ve been able to have theology and arts conversations in all of my classes, and those conversations have leaked over into other classes so as to feel like one big conversation.”

Beane hopes to work toward his doctorate degree in theology and ultimately teach in a Christian-affiliated liberal arts college. But, most important to his journey, he knows he’s in the right place.

“I feel called to struggle with how this experience of God in film works, and it is one reason I feel called to come to seminary to learn about theology, art and film.”

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Faith on film
By Tracy Behrendt, Correspondent

Top: Spirit of Christ Pastors Wes Syverson (left) and Kevin Bergeson (middle) pause for a laugh with Luther Seminary President Richard Bliese; bottom left: Mercy Seat © Steve Schneider; bottom right: Jacob’s Well
"Nature’s chief tool for sustainability is diversity," said Jeff Hawkins, ’80. Hawkins is executive director of Hope CSA, a working and teaching ministry for pastors that is located on Hawkins’ 99-acre farm in North Manchester, Ind. "Just as sustainable farming requires producing a variety of crops, having only one way of being church is more fragile and less sustainable," said Hawkins, a former pastor. "The farm teaches students an organic way of life through direct experience."

Hawkins believes the lessons nature provides for attendees readily translate to the church through his unique ministry at Hope CSA (Hands-On Pastoral Education using Clergy Sustaining Agriculture). "The small, diversified sustainable farm offers an agrarian paradigm which challenges the industrial structure under which today’s church functions," he said.

Hawkins’ ecumenical teaching ministry offers a course in experiential learning and academic study to assist pastors in becoming healthier and more effective leaders. Drawing on the resources of the small, diversified family farm that once belonged to his grandparents, he draws on nature’s ways to teach the natural process that makes for well-being or, as he likes to call it, “holy health,” or "soteria" in Greek. He believes that holy health incorporates a person’s health in all forms: spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical, interpersonal, environmental and vocational. Hawkins’ self-described "Old MacDonald" farm grows vegetables and raises pigs, cattle, meat chickens, laying hens and turkeys. Ministry participants spend the morning doing chores and light farm work, at noon eat a hearty meal and then enjoy an hour of quiet, and conclude the day by participating in discussion.

While he has the capacity to host additional attendees, Hawkins reports that the regular attendees make up the bulk of his program. A quarter of them have attended nearly every year since he started the program in 2003, half have been there two to four years, and the remaining quarter are new to the program.

According to Hawkins, the type of support his program provides is crucial to the well-being of congregations and pastors since the two are intertwined. "I’m a student of family and natural systems theory," he explained. "One idea promoted by this theory is that no system is ever healthier than its leader, so if a church’s leader is not taking his or her health seriously, it’s hard for the congregation to do so."

Research bears out the toll that ministry takes on pastors. The Pulpit &
Rethinking Stewardship: Our Culture, Our Theology, Our Practices

St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Eden Prairie, Minn. July 19–21, 2010

Why don’t American Christians share more of their wealth? American Christians, the richest in history, are surprisingly reluctant to part with their money. What are the limiting forces at work in our congregations, communities and culture? How do we overcome them to reframe all of life as God’s gift? Join us to rethink stewardship for the 21st century in light of cultural assumptions, theological possibilities and leadership practices. Make a difference; join the conversation! www.luthersem.edu/rethinking

Pew project at Duke University, a 2001 comprehensive survey of Christian clergy in the United States, uncovered troubling factors affecting pastoral health. These included unresolved congregational conflict, stress from congregational demands and challenges that prevent pastors from having quality family time or time for recreation and renewal. Other factors negatively affecting pastoral health include being on call as a pastor 24/7 and feeling lonely and isolated. These and other findings served as the basis for Jackson Carroll’s 2006 book, “God’s Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations.”

Addressing the stress and isolation pastors face is a key benefit of Hope CSA, said Hawkins. “Hope CSA provides safe collegiality. There are very few safe places today for pastors to be who they are. Discussion at most clergy gatherings tends to focus on complaining or bragging. That doesn’t happen here.”

Instead Hawkins finds that open conversation naturally flows when participants are on the farm. The most authentic conversation on the farm occurs when people are working together rather than seated around a table involved in pre-mediated discussion. “When people labor together, something special happens,” said Hawkins. “There’s a direct relationship between the inner landscape and the outer landscape.”

Find out more at www.hopecsa.org.
WORLD CANVAS PROJECT:
PRAY, THEN PAINT

BY MARC HEQUET, CORRESPONDENT
Peace for sufferers. Comfort for the troubled. Love for those alone. Family, world, church. All these prayers and more are penciled on Luther Seminary’s World Canvas Project—and painted over.

A creation of Charles Hoffman, a Master of Arts junior and Luther’s first yearlong artist-in-residence, World Canvas is open-ended. It will travel. It will grow. Any church or other group can start its own canvas.

Students, staff, faculty and visitors launched World Canvas Nov. 17 at Luther, penciling prayers in 4-inch squares, then painting over them. The prayers and paint are permanently embedded together. This first canvas, 50 feet by 4 feet, may someday be a banner. Or it could be stitched to other such canvases or cut apart to hang as a mobile.

In any case, the hidden prayers will remain, says Hoffman. “I don’t know what else is here,” he adds, “but I’m lifted up.”

The prayers, says Mary Steeber, coordinator of volunteer programs, are “private with the creator” yet “visually shared by community.”

Hoffman will gather prayers far and wide, including prayers from other faiths. “Each person is part of God’s creation and is equal to one another in the same space but different in the world next to each other. All have an equal voice in raising up as individual and unique creations and yet together in community. The canvas symbolizes this,” says Hoffman. Everyone who sees the canvas, notes Steeber, will be “held in the essence of the divine through the prayers of the people.”

All this gets us thinking about the nature of prayer itself. “It would be nice if those prayers could also be visible in public,” muses Rod Maeker, director of cross-cultural education. His prayer: “Food for all.”

Photos © Stephen Holm
Hiding prayer, however, is fine with Shannyn Magee, a Master of Divinity senior. Covering her prayer is “like taking off our burdens and painting them over,” she says. “Letting it go to someone else.”

Jen Kuntz, ‘09, has the same idea. “Would I ever find my square if it was hanging somewhere?” says Kuntz. “I thought about that. Well, it doesn't really matter. All of this is going to God.”

The Rev. James Lobdell, pastor at Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran in Inglewood, Calif., led chapel worship Nov. 17 and penciled a prayer for his congregation’s sick. “God,” says Pastor Lobdell, “can read through paint.”

A group of those at Luther Seminary interested in the arts, including Archivist Paul Daniels, developed the idea of an artist-in-residence. Hoffman’s World Canvas is an extraordinary start: It can go anywhere.

Participating — from thinking the prayer and writing it down, to painting strokes of color over it — takes just a few seconds.

Yet how are we to pray? These prayers are private—but praying them is public. Meanwhile, “we do not know how to pray as we ought,” says Paul in Romans 8, “but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.”

Sarah Henrich, professor of New Testament, points to Exodus and God’s apparent love of visual arts in construction of the tabernacle. Art mediates, says Henrich. The people feared this God of the fire on the mountain — but the tabernacle shows a God “visibly present among them, and they are able to trust God in a whole new way.”

World Canvas, then, bespeaks “the presence of God among us,” says Henrich, “even in our prayers and the choice of colors that we use.”

Some remember the Western Wall, the remains of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Visitors write prayers on slips of paper to tuck between stones. Indeed, travel to the Holy Land may be on the schedule for World Canvas Project for visits to churches, mosques and synagogues.

Pray without ceasing, Paul urges in 1 Thessalonians. World Canvas does. Wherever it is lifted up—so are we all.

Watch video of the World Canvas Project at www.luthersem.edu/story.
Years of work in trauma settings and disaster response have left Kevin Massey, ’93, with a picture of the church’s future that’s clearer than ever. “If anyone ever says, ‘Oh, where’s the church going?’ . . . the only thing I can think of is, ‘Where the church is going is great places,’” says Massey, director of the ELCA’s Domestic Disaster Response. Young volunteers and church members who assist in disaster situations around the country “really show an energy and a commitment to mission and ministry that is really uplifting and meaningful to me,” he says.

Massey is also director of, and his staff is part of, the larger Lutheran Disaster Response, a collaborative effort of the ELCA and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, which works in the long-term recovery phase of disasters in the United States and its territories. Staff from both Lutheran bodies coordinate volunteers, provide rebuilding and repairing services, and offer spiritual and emotional care for disaster victims and rostered leaders working on the front lines. Massey joined the disaster response ministry as assistant director in December 2005. His interest in pastoral care started as a M.Div. student, when he was able to connect his unit of Clinical Pastoral Education to a class on the history of pastoral care. “I think Luther Seminary is a great environment for people to explore a number of different kinds of ministry,” says Massey. “Even more since I left, as I’ve followed Luther Seminary, there’s really been a great emphasis on training leaders for mission in some very nontraditional settings. I think that’s an exciting direction.”

Massey held positions as a parish pastor and hospital chaplain before joining Lutheran Disaster Response after Hurricane Katrina. It gave him the opportunity to work directly for his church again. “I’m very, very proud of the ELCA and the work that it’s done in disaster response,” Massey says. “We can right now look at a legacy, especially if we look just at Katrina response, of really doing some amazing things.”

That legacy includes not only the work by Lutheran agencies that Massey coordinates in times of crisis but also the growing efforts of young ELCA members, some of whom spend their spring breaks every year working in disaster-affected areas through a program called “What a Relief!” “It happens in communities all around the country, and it happens outside of what we do here (at Lutheran Disaster Response),” says Massey. “Any pastor and church, any congregation that sees any emergency or need in their neighborhood and reaches out to love and serve their neighbor in that way is being Lutheran Disaster Response. And that’s a message I would like to uplift to pastors anywhere in the country.”

Do you know a Luther grad with an exemplary ministry?

Faithfulness in Ministry Awards
The Luther Seminary Alumni/ae Council annually recognizes exemplary faithfulness of its alums who graduated within the last 10 years, within the past 25 years or more than 25 years ago. Whose ministry has inspired you? Download a nomination form or complete your nomination online at www.luthersem.edu/fim. Nominations are due Aug. 4. Questions? Contact Mary Steeber at msteeber@luthersem.edu or 651-641-3596.
For many young adults, finding faith comes through embracing the unknown. Likewise, for Karis Thompson, laying the groundwork for a new faith community of young adults in the Fargo-Moorhead area has meant embracing unknowns about what that community will become.

“There's a lot of trust—there has to be,” says Thompson, a 2006 Luther grad who in September stepped in as the community organizer for The Project F-M. “We have a trust of God being in control of this process and directing us towards what we don't know or understand and a belief in people who might not have the same background or experience in church or understanding of faith that we have.”

The Project F-M is a joint effort of the ELCA's Eastern North Dakota and Northwestern Minnesota Synods, along with several congregations and community leaders in Fargo-Moorhead, where more than 40,000 adults ages 18–40 are without a church. As The Project’s only staff member, Thompson has one year to connect with people in the area and develop leaders who will in turn develop a young-adult faith community based on their own needs and ideas. Instead of starting with a definite vision, The Project is beginning with the people and their interests and gifts.

"Rather than seeing ourselves as carrying a tradition into the world or proclaiming core beliefs to an audience, it’s more of an openness that we’re intentional about—bringing that openness to a community and expecting to see God in new ways,” Thompson says.

It's a challenge, but it's the type of challenge Thompson became prepared for in her Master of Arts program in Congregational Mission and Leadership. Thanks to Luther faculty members who encouraged her imagination about the interweaving of faith and culture, Thompson was able to engage different populations and multicultural churches through several independent studies. Graduating with a call to help transform communities, she spent nearly three years at the Redeemer Center for Life, a nonprofit founded by Redeemer Lutheran Church in north Minneapolis.

Back in Fargo-Moorhead, where Thompson attended Concordia College, she's again working to shape a community while centering on faith. And, although it's still uncertain what form the new young-adult community will take, Thompson can already see a faith community at work.

"It's a radically inclusive process where, as an organizer, I have interest in talking to absolutely everyone and thinking of everyone involved as a potential leader versus having an established idea of who can lead, who should be invited,” she says. "The design of wanting to engage with all people and to learn from them speaks to an experience of grace.”

**Karis Thompson, ’06, Embraces the Unknown**

By Andy Behrendt, M.Div. senior
Want to invite a faculty or staff member to present in your congregation? Visit www.luthersem.edu/resourceguide for up-to-date topic listings and contact information.

**Terence Fretheim, Elva B. Lovell**  
Professor of Old Testament, gave lectures at Chung Chi College Divinity School at the University of Hong Kong; the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong; and Jinling Union Theological Seminary, Nanjing University, Nanjing, China. His article, “Interpreting the Prophets and Issues of Social Justice,” was published in October in a collection of essays, “The Bible and the American Future,” edited by Robert Jewett.

**Mary Jane Haemig, associate professor of church history,** received a fellowship from the Herzog-August-Bibliothek (translation: Duke August Library) of Wolfenbuettel, Germany, which will allow her to spend five months doing research there in 2010. This library has the most outstanding collection of Reformation-era printed works in all of Europe. In August she attended a meeting in Helsinki, Finland, of the planning committee for the next international Luther Congress, scheduled for 2012.


**Amy Marga, assistant professor of systematic theology,** led adult forums on prayer and moral decision making and the Bible in January at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church, Apple Valley, Minn.

**Andrew Root, assistant professor of youth and family ministry,** attended the ELCA Western Mission Network gathering in Phoenix in January. He presented workshops on “Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry,” “Young People in a Screen-Based World,” and “Relationships Unfiltered” for the National Youth Works Convention gatherings in Atlanta and Cincinnati. He also offered plenary presentations at the Pathways Youth Ministry Leadership Training schools in Omaha, Neb., and Bloomington, Ill., this fall.

**Kathryn Schifferdecker, assistant professor of Old Testament,** gave presentations on Genesis 1–3 and other creation texts at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Eagan, Minn., and Diamond Lake Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, this fall.

**Lois Malcolm, associate professor of systematic theology,** wrote an essay on “Spirit and Flesh,” for “Transformative Theologies: Lutheran Feminist, Womanist, and Mujerista Theologies,” edited by Mary Streufert (Fortress Press, forthcoming). She has also co-authored a forthcoming essay on art with her sister, artist Kirsten Malcolm Berry, “We Wish to See Jesus,” for Lutheran Forum and presented a keynote paper on “Raised for Our Justification: Christ’s Spirit for Us and for All” for the fifth annual Missional Church Consultation, Created and Led by the Spirit, at Luther Seminary in November.

**Walter Sundberg, professor of church history,** preached at the historic East Koshkonong Lutheran Church in southern Wisconsin on the 165th anniversary of its first service Aug. 31.

**Paul Westermeyer, professor of church music,** led part of the Lectures in Church Music Conference at Concordia
University, River Forest, Ill., in October. Westermeyer spoke on Carl Schalk’s legacy for the church in honor of Schalk’s 80th birthday. He led adult forums on "Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs" at Mt. Carmel Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, and on "Worship: Overview, Lutheran, Currents and Children" at Memorial Lutheran Church, Afton, Minn., in October. He also published an article, "Oratorio," in the ALCM Cross Accent, and received the Golden Pen Award from the Metro Lutheran newspaper in October.

Dwight Zscheile, assistant professor of congregational mission and leadership, was keynote speaker at the annual convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri in November.

COMING SOON . . .

Lois Farag, assistant professor of early church history, will lead a two-week series on "Desert Spirituality" for the Oblates of the Order of St. Benedict at St. Paul’s Monastery, St. Paul, Minn., March 21 and April 19. She will speak on "Eastern Christianity" at Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church, St. Paul, Minn., April 25.

Andrew Root will offer keynote presentations at the FirstThird Dialogues on theology for youth ministry at Luther Seminary March 1–3.

Kathryn Schifferdecker will lead a class on the Dead Sea Scrolls for Luther Seminary’s Lay School of Theology in March and April. She will speak at several churches in the Twin Cities area on the Dead Sea Scrolls in March, April and May, in conjunction with an exhibit on the Dead Sea Scrolls at the Science Museum of Minnesota.

Matt Skinner, associate professor of New Testament, will give several adult-education Sunday-morning presentations this spring: "The Fruit of the Spirit," Feb. 7 and 14, at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Minneapolis; "The Trial Narratives: What Jesus’ Trial Tells Us about Him and the World," March 7 and 14, Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church, Plymouth, Minn.; and "How the Bible Came to Be," April 11, 18 and 25, Normandale Lutheran Church, Edina, Minn. In July he will be teaching at a family/adult camp (July 23–25) and a continuing education retreat (July 26–29) at Christikon in Montana.

FACULTY’S PUBLISHED BOOKS


Andrew Root’s next books, "The Promise of Despair: The Way of the Cross as the Way of the Church" (Abingdon Press), and "The Children of Divorce: The Loss of Family as the Loss of Being" (Baker Academic Press) will be out in March.

Christian Scharen, assistant professor of worship, has three forthcoming books: "Concrete Church: A Conversation between Theology and Congregational Studies" (Eerdmans Publishing, edited with Pete Ward, Paul Fiddes and John Swinton); "Ethnography as Theology and Ethics" (Continuum Publishing, Aana Vigen, co-author); and "Broken Hallelujah: Pop Culture, Imagination and God" (Brazos Press).


Lloyd Svendsbye, president emeritus, published "I Paid All My Debts," (Lutheran University Press) about his ancestors’ saga from Norway to North Dakota.

Paul Westermeyer wrote the "Hymnal Companion for Evangelical Lutheran Worship" (Augsburg Fortress, 2010), which includes entries for 650 hymns and their tunes, authors, translators and composers.
Marshall, Minn., is a far cry from London, England. Yet what Travis and Brandy Gerjets, both 2008 Master of Divinity graduates, learned from a year exploring the emerging church movement in the British Isles is that the questions people were asking in downtown London are often the same questions people are asking in congregations in rural Minnesota.

“People are almost to the point of desperate for meaningful relationships,” said Travis.

As recipients of the 2008 Graduate Preaching Fellowship, Travis and his wife, Brandy, were able to follow their interest in postmodernism to the United Kingdom. The U.K. is often seen as the cradle of the emerging church movement despite—or perhaps because of—its growing secularism.

“The church is really struggling to connect with young people there,” said Travis. “Yet there are religious communities that are finding ways to proclaim the gospel in creative, unorthodox—or, in some cases, radically orthodox—ways.”

Just as one of the hallmarks of emerging-church worship is an often loosely structured, casual experience, the Gerjetses headed to England not knowing quite how they were going to spend their year. Yet they found that once they started traveling they quickly were welcomed into conversation.

“There were so many willing and gracious, helpful people who invited us to join them and embraced us as part of their community,” said Brandy. “And even though they’ve been at this emerging-church thing a little longer, they were so adamant that they didn’t have the answers. They see themselves as just stumbling along on their faith journey, struggling to be an authentic form of church for people who desperately want to meet God somewhere.”

After nine months in London and three months in Israel, the Gerjetses now find themselves serving as interim pastors at St. Stephen’s Lutheran Church in Marshall while awaiting their first calls.

“It feels like we’re having a chance now to question everything—we as new pastors in a new setting and the church as a whole,” said Travis. “That’s thrilling and terrifying at the same time. We’re having lots of joyful but difficult conversations about what is meaningful. And what we learned this year is giving us language and vision to guide those conversations.”
YOUR GIFTS, YOUR IMPACT

Amber Marten surfs a wave of blessings with donor support

Seminary wasn’t a choice for Amber Marten; it was a given. “I knew I would come to seminary no matter what. I knew it was what I needed to do,” she said. Marten is one of the many Luther Seminary students who benefits from scholarship support each year. Scholarships have affirmed for students like Marten that others believe in them.

“In a way, it is overwhelming to think that people who don’t know you believe in you. It’s awesome to know that the Holy Spirit is working through people’s lives and prompting them to give generously.”

Marten says her internship at Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Torrance, Calif., was “a huge affirmation” of her call. Because it was so appreciative of her ministry, the 400-member congregation gave Marten a surfboard signed by each member.

“Donors blessed me, and I was able to bless all these people. Imagine the waves of blessings these gifts have and continue to produce!”

Are you interesting in learning more about giving through scholarship support? Contact the Office of Seminary Relations at 888-358-8437 or semrel@luthersem.edu.

DID YOU KNOW?

• Luther Seminary awards 470 scholarships each year.
• There are currently 353 endowed scholarship funds.
• $2.4 million in financial aid will be awarded in the 2009-10 academic year.
• Local congregations will provide an additional $1.37 million in assistance.
• 70 percent of students graduate with seminary debt, and the median debt of these students is $43,325.
• The cost to educate a student during the 2009–10 academic year is $29,870.
• During the 2008–09 academic year, donor support made up 55 percent of the annual budget when combining outright gifts and endowment income.
Deanna Wildermuth, ’97, was installed as pastor at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Mercer Island, Wash., in September.

Wayne Knutson, ’84, was presented with the Bronze Star in April for duties performed while deployed in Iraq. Knutson is a colonel and senior staff chaplain with the Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) Agency.

Dana Nissen, ’83, was awarded a Ph.D. from the Graduate Theological Foundation.

Tom Schlotterback, ’87, started serving in January as director of vocation and church leadership at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn.


Jeffrey Barrow, ’79, was elected to a six-year term as bishop of the Greater Milwaukee Synod of the ELCA in December.

Jennings Feroe, ’39, died Nov. 22 at Northfield Hospital in Northfield, Minn. He was 96.
Luther Seminary and Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota

Dual Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy and Theology

This program prepares students to take the exam for state licensure in most states as a marriage and family therapist. Graduates may go on to serve the therapeutic and spiritual needs of individuals, couples and families in public, private and religious settings. At the completion of the program you’ll receive a Master of Arts degree in theology from Luther Seminary and a Master of Arts degree in Marriage and Family Therapy from Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota.

The dual degree program offers:

- A wider range of career options.
- A wealth of potential field-experience sites via links to Luther Seminary’s network of partner congregations.
- Participation in the Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota accredited counseling program and a deepening of your theological and spiritual formation.
- Preparation to take the state licensure exam in most states: Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT).

For more information, visit:

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Our Father, We Have Wandered

Lenten Devotional 2010

Begin a new morning routine! Sign up to receive free Lenten devotions in your inbox throughout the Lenten season, and you’ll continue to receive God Pause, Luther Seminary’s daily e-mail devotion, throughout the year.

Go to www.luthersem.edu/godpause to begin receiving your devotions on the first day of Lent, Feb. 17.

Lenten devotions are written by faculty and staff of Luther Seminary and Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary as part of their shared initiatives through the Western Mission Cluster.

Interested in a Lenten devotional booklet? Visit www.luthersem.edu/lent to place an order for a complimentary copy. Requests will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis.
STUDENT POLL: What is one New Year’s resolution you have made in regard to your ministry?

“I want to explore more creative aspects of ministry. It can be a little dogmatic at times.”
—Ethan Hulme, M.Div. middler

“To begin to imagine in a very active way what pastoral ministry will be like in a way that engages true learning, conversations and the activities of my congregation.”
—Chimezie Ukaonu, M.Div. senior

“I have begun to pray New Years’ prayers instead of setting New Years’ resolutions. This new year, I ask God to guide and direct me as I continue to develop my Trinitarian theology and my gift of hospitality in my daily life and in the life of the congregation.”
—Jennifer Wentz, M.Div. middler

“That children and youth will be welcomed into all forms of worship with open arms and patient hearts; that congregations will help families with faith formation in the home from birth instead of trying to jam it all in during confirmation; oh, and that world-peace thing.”
—Jennifer Lathrop, M.A. senior

“To finish my dissertation and hope that it can be a resource for churches in Scandinavia.”
—Jeppe Bach Nikolajsen, Ph.D. 3rd year

“In Nigeria I work with youth, and so I want to encourage them to go into mission.”
—Buntausa Amos, M.Th. 1st year
Fifth Annual Missional Church Consultation truly led by the Spirit

Created and Led by the Spirit: Planting Missional Congregations was the very fitting theme of this year’s Missional Church Consultation, held Nov. 6-7, 2009. The event brought together church planters, denominational leaders, pastors, lay leaders, educators, students and scholars in discussing how the Spirit is leading in the planting of missional congregations for a new apostolic era.

The featured keynote presenters are all leaders in their fields. They were:

- Leith Anderson, senior pastor, Wooddale Church, Eden Prairie, Minn.
- Mary Sue Dreier, associate professor of congregational mission and leadership, Luther Seminary
- Lois Malcolm, associate professor of systematic theology, Luther Seminary
- Miroslav Volf, director, Yale Center for Faith and Culture; Henry B. Wright Professor of Systematic Theology, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Conn.

This year’s Consultation gathered more participants than ever before. Here’s what they had to say about the event:

“I was impressed with the caliber of knowledge and expertise in the presenters.”

“This consultation has the possibility and promise to be one of the most awesome things available to ELCA people who are sensing the call to step out in new ways for mission.”

“The level and quality of material is truly outstanding . . . and then to have the privilege to be in conversation about it! Wow.”

“Thanks for bringing together stimulating thinkers and a great conversation!”

To see more photos of this year’s event, visit www.flickr.com/photos/lutherseminary, choose Sets, and then choose Missional Church Consultation.

Mark your calendar for next year’s Consultation, Cultivating Sent Communities: Missional Spiritual Formation, Nov. 12–13, 2010. For speaker information, visit www.luthersem.edu/missional_consult.
Dive Into Your Faith With Lay School Classes!
Informal, non-credit classes taught by seminary professors for lay people who want to learn more about matters relating to their Christian faith and life.

Winter (Feb. 1–March 1)
- Leading Women: Religion, Reform and Renewal in America
  Faculty: Sally Padgett, Instructor of Religion, Augsburg College
- Making Sense of Scripture (WEBCAST AVAILABLE)*
  Faculty: David Lose, Marbury E. Anderson Chair in Biblical Preaching
- Evil and the Bible
  Faculty: Fred Gaiser, Professor of Old Testament

Spring (March 22–April 19)
- Crazy Talk: A Not-So-Stuffy Introduction to Theology
  Noon–2 p.m. Mondays
  Faculty: Rolf Jacobson, Associate Professor of Old Testament
- A Walk Through the New Testament (WEBCAST AVAILABLE)*
  Faculty: Matthew Skinner, Associate Professor of New Testament

Classes are held Mondays from 7 to 9 p.m. unless otherwise noted. For class descriptions or to register, visit www.luthersem.edu/layschool. For more information, call 651-641-3416 or e-mail kairos@luthersem.edu.

*To attend Making Sense of Scripture or A Walk Through the New Testament via webcast you will need a high-speed Internet connection.

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March
- 1–5 Intentional Interim Ministry (Phase 1)
- 22–23 School for Lay Ministry
- 24–25 Children’s Ministry 101

April
- 20–22 Christian Leadership in the Age of Global Media Cultures
- 26–30 Congregational Best Practices

May
- 4–7 Sacramental Presence in a Changing World
- 10–12 Process Preaching: A System for Delivering Extemporaneous Sermons
- 17–19 Discover Your Call—Dependable Strengths® for Congregations
Jerry Williams makes a sound impact on future church leaders.

You can’t see the mark Jerry Williams has left on his congregations, but you can certainly hear it. A few months after his arrival at Bethel Lutheran in Northfield, Minn., in May 2007, he revamped the outdated audio system. His updates included a four-camera video system and getting Bethel services broadcast on public television.

“I don’t want anyone to miss out on their salvation because they can’t hear the preacher,” says Williams.

In his 2 1/2 years at Bethel and 20 years at his former congregation, Jerry has trained more than 30 students on church audio and video equipment. While acquiring these skills, they also learn the liturgy and other life lessons from Jerry. Future generations are Williams’ motivation for giving to Luther Seminary. "I’ve been blessed with some wonderful pastors, but they will be gone. We need to replace them."

Charitable gift annuities allow Williams to ensure that the future leadership of the church will be strong while sustaining his own financial health. He and his first wife also established a $100,000 scholarship to support students in the Children, Youth and Family Ministry program.

“We need to start with children and families,” he says.
Seminarian Scholarship Challenge

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