

Alumni gather for virtual Homecoming,
honor distinguished grads



epistle

FALL 2021

The magazine of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago



Podcast with
humble beginnings
surprises, delights

What stays on the shelf

I dreaded the task ahead. In order to rearrange a room in our home, I had to move four bookshelves. To move the bookshelves, I had to sort the books, choosing which to keep or throw. Many of you have done this before, the rest of you eventually will, and it's hard work. Since there's no right way to proceed, you're left to your own devices to slog through a morass from which you think you'll never emerge. It takes time as each volume enters your hands, is closely examined, and then dismissed with a final "stay" or "go." It is ruthless and calls for firm discipline, steady will, and a bit of courage.

As it turned out, the work was far easier than I thought for numerous books. The main portion I hadn't read for decades and never merited a second visit, books that should have remained a sentence. Worse still were those I never read, fiercely promoted by kindly folks who, I liked to imagine, were now mired in their own book-sorting purgatory, rethinking their advice from long ago. All these books were easy decisions since they held little attachment, only the regret of having retained them for so long. "Best wishes to you," I said to each, "May someone else find a delight in you that has eluded me."

At the other end of the spectrum were easy decisions for the opposite reason. These were treasures, keepers. It's not that they bore fine writing or ideas (though they often had both), but that they were transformative. These books changed my mind, opened my eyes, deepened my wonder, not just once but in every later reading. How could I let them go now? To be clear, I don't mean the fraught notion of the "classic" (On what grounds? And who decides?) which are very often monuments to power

and how it is encoded. I mean books that durably engage every new time and place. These stay on the shelf.

This left many volumes where decisions were harder. These books were neither vacuous nor valued, but ones I realized were kept for other reasons. As I puzzled about why it was so hard to decide about them, I would recall a person, a location, a signal event. My mind didn't race to words between the covers but to graduate school days, or reading by a lake, or urgent words with long lost friends. To abandon such a book felt like betraying those memories, while clinging to it felt like a waste of space and energy. No matter how much emotion we assign to a book, it is not a talisman by which the past will return.

If you wonder why I've spent so many words on so mundane a task or suspect this might no longer be just about sorting books, you're right. Theological education, ministerial formation, and our own seminary are being rearranged in ways unknown to earlier generations. This began long ago during decades of change that befell our supporting church structures and accelerates today as we emerge from the pandemic into a world where everything is being rethought. And it will not do for our school simply to reorganize what we have long cherished, hope for minimal fuss, and then declare "Good enough."

The disruption we face is real and urgent, but not tragic. It is an overdue opportunity to clear the detritus, let go of what cannot return, and use our treasure well. On these pages and elsewhere in the months ahead, you will read about these choices that call for firm discipline, steady will, and a bit of courage – trusting in God's providence most of all. 🌱



James Nieman

The disruption we face is real and urgent, but not tragic.

epistle

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FEATURES



- 2** Student leaders retreat new to LSTC
- 2** Longtime former faculty members Sherman and Linss die
- 3** Wise Stewards Initiative encourages new leadership approach
- 3** Lilly grant helps LSTC confront equity, climate health
- 4** Honoring five distinguished alumni highlight of Homecoming/Alumni Week
By Julie B. Sevig
- 8** Humor, humility & honesty Podcast with humble beginnings surprises & delights
By Julie B. Sevig
- 12** Ji Bu: From Myanmar to Chicago to become a theologian
- 12** Juan Perea: Taking distance learning to a new level
- 13** Kilian Schrenk: A voyage to study, learn and experience American Lutheranism
- 14** Vance Blackfox Shifting the narrative of mission and service
By Jan Boden
- 17** A life of faithfulness Lois and Bill Williams' giving made the ordinary extraordinary
By Bill Myatt

DEPARTMENTS

- 2** Up Front
- 18** Transitions
- 18** Class Notes
- 22** In Memoriam
- 23** Faculty & Staff Accomplishments
- 21** Events
- 24** Life at LSTC

Student leaders retreat new to LSTC

LSTC leaders did something new this fall that they hadn't done before—they hosted a day-long retreat for student leaders to discuss the role students play in community life.

“As we approached the start of a new academic year, we had to acknowledge that the vast majority of our student body had a very limited experience of pre-COVID seminary life,” explained Erik Christensen, pastor to the community, who led the retreat with Vima Couvertier-Cruz, assisted by Marvin Wickware.

Indeed, the picture is eye-opening: the incoming class was new to campus, second-year students had only attended on Zoom, and third and fourth year students were either on internships or were academic seniors whose only memory of LSTC pre-COVID was the fall semester of their first year. Only five students in the masters programs have experienced a full year of LSTC student and community life pre-COVID.

During COVID, many norms and traditions broke down. Student government and student organizations either stopped

altogether or carried out a stripped-down version of their normal activities. So, the retreat covered the areas of student government, student organizations, student-led programming, and student representation (e.g., student participation in board committees, faculty search committees, and other administrative and programmatic elements of seminary life).

“Understanding that we weren't going to be able to simply get back to the way things used to be, we wanted to create a forum for students to evaluate for themselves the role that student government and student organizations can play in shaping LSTC's community and to begin to organize themselves in meaningful and sustainable ways for the year ahead,” Christensen said. ✝



Student leaders participated both in person and online at the fall retreat. At right, Erik Christensen speaks to the group. Below are students Katie Linthicum, left, and Katie Mueller.



Longtime former faculty members Sherman and Linss die

Franklin Sherman, who joined the LSTC faculty in 1966 as professor of Christian ethics, died Aug. 31 at age 93 in Bethlehem, Pa. He attended Muhlenberg College and the Divinity School of the University of Chicago.



Franklin Sherman

In the early 1950s, he served

Wise Stewards Initiative encourages new leadership approach

LSTC is participating in the Wise Stewards Initiative of the In Trust Center for Theological Schools. The Wise Stewards Initiative encourages boards of theological schools to “step beyond the usual approaches to governance” toward governance as a “change agent and engine for innovation.”

LSTC is one of 10 theological schools in the U.S. chosen to participate in the first year of the Wise Stewards Initiative funded by a grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust. There is no cost to the school to participate in the initiative.

In its proposal to In Trust, LSTC wrote that participating in the Wise Stewards Initiative will “...allow us to gain additional

insight and skills related to becoming a strategically diverse institution with deep concern for equity and inclusion.” It is expected to improve how the board leads the seminary, passing that leadership onto both the congregations and communities from which the board is drawn, but also prepare students to lead in the church.

Kristi Ferguson, chair of the board of directors, said, “This initiative will help us build on LSTC’s strategic plan, its public church curriculum, and its partnerships with community agencies, to develop a model for strategic diversity and innovation to help us fulfill our mission – raising up diverse and innovative leaders for the church.” ❁

as pastor of Advent Lutheran Church in Chicago, and from 1958 to 1961 he taught in the religious studies department at the University of Iowa. He taught at Mansfield College in Oxford, England, serving theological students in exile from Europe.

Sherman was on the LSTC faculty 23 years, 10 as dean of the faculty. He was a visiting professor at institutions in Switzerland, Israel, Zimbabwe and Japan. In 1989, he became founding director of the Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding at Muhlenberg College, where he served until 1996, including consulting with the ELCA in its 1994 declaration renouncing the antisemitic writings of Martin Luther.

A memorial service was held Sept. 11 at Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit, Emmaus Pa. He is survived by three children and four grandchildren.

Wilhelm C. Linss, professor emeritus of New Testament, died Sept. 25 in Naperville, Ill., after a brief decline in health.

Linss taught New Testament at Central Lutheran Seminary in Nebraska from 1957 until the school merged with LSTC in 1967. Then he taught at LSTC until his retirement in 1992. A memorial service is Nov. 20 in Naperville.. ❁



Wilhelm C. Linss

Lilly grant helps LSTC confront equity, climate health

LSTC has received a \$49,500 grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., through its Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative. The planning grant will be used to develop a detailed implementation strategy to equip leaders to address the intersecting areas of equity and climate health.

In the grant proposal, President James Nieman wrote: “Church leaders now must grasp and confront twin forces that endanger us all – first, harm to neighbor due to race, gender, and sexuality; and second, harm to creation due to climate change. These are deeply theological questions of sin and evil to which the gospel replies with truth, healing, and promise. Attending to these must be part of the formation we offer from now on.”

The grant was made in the first phase of the three-phase Pathways initiative, which was launched in early 2021. The initiative is part of Lilly Endowment’s commitment to support efforts that strengthen religious institutions and networks. It seeks to enhance their effectiveness and long-term sustainability by addressing key challenges and taking advantage of promising opportunities.

Chris Huang, director of institutional effectiveness and registrar, will lead a steering team through a 20-week period to explore key issues and to develop the implementation plan.

The team will use the planning period to enhance LSTC’s awareness of the scope and significance of the areas of equity and climate health, developing wider ownership across the school for this distinctive curricular orientation. ❁

Edgar Krentz, 93, beloved professor, died Oct. 31, just as this issue of the *Epistle* was being sent to the printer. He will be remembered in the winter issue of the magazine. ❁

By Julie B. Sevig

For the second year in a row, LSTC presented distinguished alumni awards in a ceremony held online. The five recipients—with varied years and experiences of service—expressed deep gratitude to the school, their families and all those who have cheered them on.

Hosted by alumni board members Michael Fick and Sara Olson-Smith, the annual ceremony presenting the Distinguished Alumni Awards was the culmination of Oct. 13-14 Homecoming and Alumni Week events (mostly held online).

Alumni were invited to sit in on classes, attend worship and separate class gatherings, witness the commissioning of the school's new Antiracism Transformation Team, and "attend" the awards ceremony livestreamed from Augustana Chapel. One recipient, David Hedlin, was on hand to receive his award in person.

In President James Nieman's welcome, he said the five recipients stand on behalf of all who graduated from LSTC or a predecessor seminary. The school, which has honored distinguished alumni since 1974, has some 4,000 alumni all over the world. The stories of these five, he said, represent "a deep and rich ministry in and beyond our church."

Still, the seminary faces twin challenges, he said: too few students seeking vocations of ministry and service, and the complex demands on those preparing for vocations in a dramatically changed church and world.

"The five of you this evening are the answer to those two challenges... Your lives do not testify that ministry is easy or trouble free — often quite the opposite — but they do show that transformational ministry is possible, generative, amazing — always because of the divine mercy that supports and sustains us. There is no greater recruitment tool for future ministers than the legacy of you who now serve and do so gracefully, patiently, durably." ✠

Homecoming

Honoring five distinguished alumni highlight of Homecoming/Alumni Week



David Hedlin accepts his distinguished alumni award in Augustana Chapel.

oming



John Kotovsky (1998, MDiv)

John Kotovsky received the Specialized Ministry Award. He retired in June as chief mission officer for Lutheran Senior Services (LSS), St. Louis, Mo., where he focused on the faith-inspired and Christian core values of LSS through the pastoral care team and the Christ Care Fund.

Kotovsky said that although he had always had a heart for ministry, his career as a CPA and CFO came first. It was during his time as a CFO when he heard God's call to ministry, thanking his friend and fellow award-winner Ron Glusenkamp for walking with him in his discernment, and Bob Bertram, an LSTC professor of systematic theology.

"I was a student in his first class in a church basement in St. Louis. I want to thank LSTC for their vision in supporting Bob's program and granting me LSTC

credit for all the classes that I took... It enabled me to take my classes at night and continue to work fulltime while remaining in St. Louis with my family."

Kotovsky recalled the significant year he spent on campus (1997-98), fortunate to learn from professors like Ralph Klein and Ed Krentz. From there he went on to serve Community Church of Joy in Pheonix, Ariz. In 2001 he returned to St. Louis to work in real estate, then Lutheran Senior Services.

"LSS allowed me to return to my roots because when I was 17 years old, my first job was working as a dishwasher at the Lutheran Convalescent Home, an LSS community... in many ways it was a home coming for me and I was able to combine my heart and passion for ministry with my academic and business experience to serve." ❁

Ronald Glusenkamp (Christ Seminary-Seminex, 1980, MDiv)

Ron Glusenkamp (pictured above with his wife, Sue) received the Called to Lead Award. In addition to being a parish pastor he served the Board of Pensions (now Portico) in Minneapolis, and The Campaign for the ELCA: Always Being Made New at the churchwide offices. It resulted in \$50 million beyond the campaign goal of \$198 million.

Glusenkamp accepted his award on behalf of all those who have shaped him, beginning with his wife Sue, saying "I wouldn't be a recipient this evening if it wasn't for her love, coaching and mentoring along the way." He noted others—parents and other faith-formers, and their children and grandchildren who have taught them about leadership, and new ways to see love and grace unfold. He also accepted the award on behalf of the congregations he's served (in Kansas, Missouri, Colorado and now Arizona.)

"Being a parish pastor is such an amazing call," he said, also recognizing the influence of Portico and churchwide.

After a nod to his friend and co-award winner Kotovsky, he accepted the award on behalf of Seminex donors, alums and faculty. Quoting the "great theologian Yogi Bera" he said, "You can observe a lot just by watching, and I watched a lot during those days at Seminex and I learned so much," offering the same gratefulness to those who work at and support LSTC's mission. ❁





Kara Baylor (2000, MDiv)

Kara Baylor (above, center) received the Witness to the World Award. She has served as campus pastor of Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisc., since 2014. She also leads the Center for Faith and Spirituality there, drawing on her more than 20 years in youth ministry.

Social justice has always been a part of her ministry when serving congregations in Wisconsin, Minnesota and North Dakota. Baylor claimed her public voice in a new way when she started her blog, *Pissed Off Pastor – Righteous Anger Pushing for Reformation*, in June 2020. In introducing her, Olson-Smith said, “She speaks her truth as a person of color. She believes in calling what is evil, evil and calling what is good, good. Theology of the cross. The evil of slavery and dehumanization of black and brown people is a deep wound in America.”

Baylor said she was honored to be seen as a witness to the world through her work with youth and young adults, and for her blog.

“In my call as a pastor I have taken seriously the role of lifting up others and helping them find their gifts and what is possible for them. My most important witness to the world is sending others off to proclaim the gospel... So if it’s playing a role in the lives of an amazing young pastor or watching a Carthage student take what feels like a daring step that leads them to awe and wonder, I love helping others find their way to be a witness to the world. Because I don’t like being the center of attention.”

She knew that at some point in her ministry she would be called on to speak up and speak out on race in the church. “Little did I know that the summer of 2020 would be the time for me to get mad and shout at the world that Black Lives Matter.” ❁

Little did I know that the summer of 2020 would be the time for me to get mad and shout at the world that Black Lives Matter.

Kara Baylor

David Hedlin (1978, MDiv)

David L. Hedlin received the Excellence in Parish Ministry Award. He is pastor of Peace Lutheran Church, New Lenox, Ill. Following the Columbine High School shooting in 1999, he worked with schools to bring the asset building program, Teach Everyone that Assets Matter (TEAM), to the community. In 2019 he received the New Lenox Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year award for his work through the parish and in the high school district.

In 2013 Hedlin and members of the congregation published a children’s coloring book, *Questions Kids Ask about God*.

Gary M. Simpson (Christ Seminary–Seminex, 1976, MDiv; 1983, ThD)

Gary Simpson, professor emeritus of systematic theology at Luther Seminary, received the Faithful Servant Award. He served on the faculty of Luther Seminary from 1990 until his retirement in 2020, and since 1993 has taught some 500 people through the Lay School of Ministry in the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin.

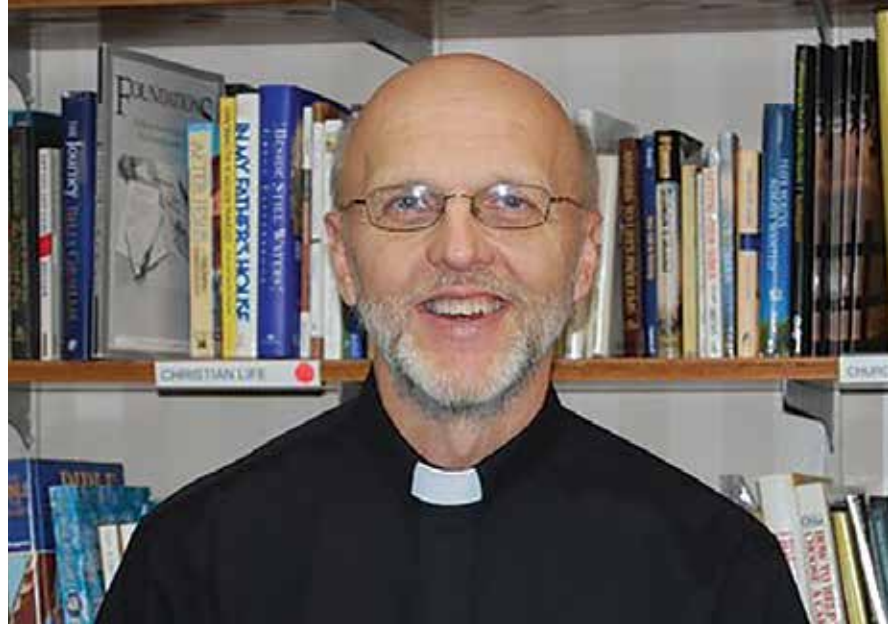
Simpson is a widely published and active scholar, whose most recent research and writing has been in the areas of Lutheran confessional theology, congregational mission, doctrine of the trinity and theology of the cross.

As a pastor he served congregations in California, Missouri and Oregon.

“Oh my,” Simpson began, recalling this is what his Grandma Klemm would say when something happened that took her breath away. “This Faithful Servant Award

He recalled Nieman telling a group to think of a return on investment not in terms of interest or dividends, but in the ongoing impact in people. “I am the fortunate recipient of those investments,” he said, recalling the investments of his parents, brothers, and life on a family farm and community that grounded them. He felt supported in education and was involved in service.

Other investments, he said, came from his home congregation and confirmation pastor, Gustavus Adolphus College and LSTC, classmates and professors, his MIC and internship sites, congregations he’s served (Wisconsin and Illinois). And certainly the investments of his own family, wife, and their daughters, who



have expanded their horizon of who is hurting in the world and the differences that can be made.

“I am here because of the wonderful investments of all kinds of people,” he continued, saying he is cognizant that it all comes from

God, who loves and invests in all of us. “We matter, and we can make a difference. And who knows? As we keep investing, each of us in our own ways, who knows who the next lucky person will be who gets to stand here.” ❁

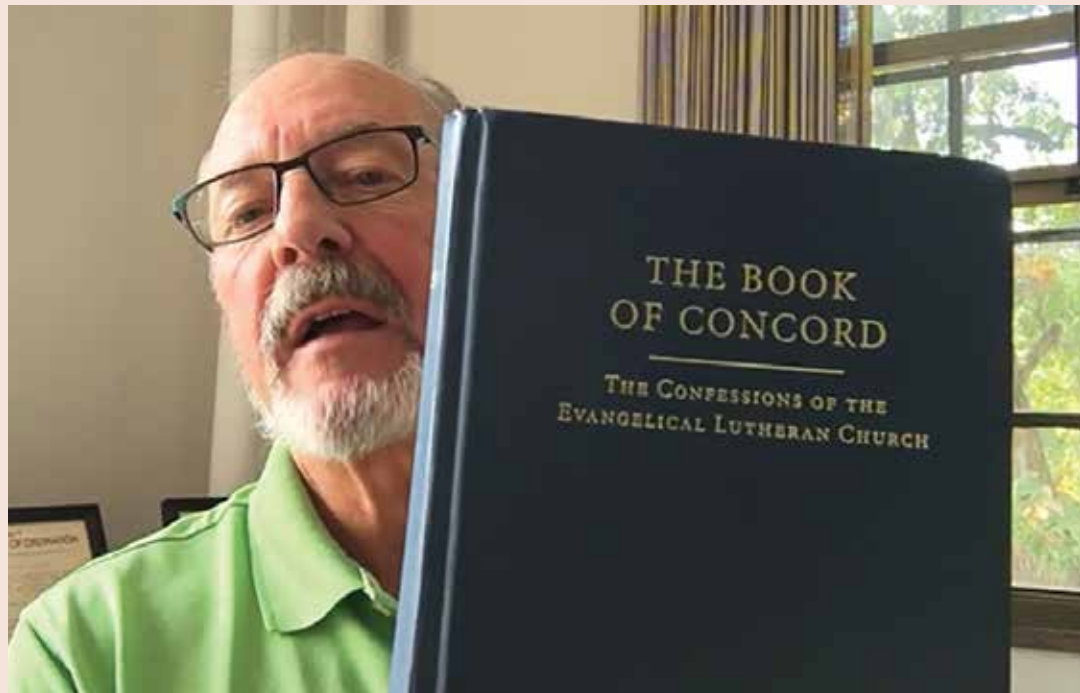
takes my breath away.”

As anyone who has received such an award knows, he said, we are all—as Sir Issac Newton once noted—“standing on the shoulders of mentors, helpers and supporters.”

He recounted growing up in the church, serving as an acolyte in the 7th and 8th grades at the congregation’s weekly funerals, and being tapped as a pastor early on.

His ministry while in Portland, Ore., was significant—his portfolio included mission and community outreach that resulted in ecumenical ministries and carried him “deeply and personally into Jewish-Christian collaboration” and a community action program and governor’s commission on hunger that created change that continues today. “Much of what I learned in my parish ministry has fueled my academic research, writing, and teaching to this very day,” he said.

At Luther, Simpson also taught some 2,500 students over 30 years, including teaching many students from around the world, mostly from Africa and South and Southeast Asian countries. ❁



Much of what I learned in my parish ministry has fueled my academic research, writing, and teaching to this very day.

Gary M. Simpson



Humor, humility & honesty

Podcast with
humble beginnings
surprises & delights

By Julie B. Sevig



From left: Assistant professors Kimberly Wagner and Marvin Wickware host the podcast, and Eric Fowler is the editor.

When Kimberly Wagner, Marvin Wickware and their podcast editor Eric Fowler bounced around names for what would become “An Incomplete Field Guide to Ministry,” Wagner says they wanted the name to reflect what the podcast is about, but also “have a little humor, humility and honesty. Hence the ‘incomplete field guide’ part..”

That same humor, humility and honesty come through when Wagner and Wickware discuss the podcast, now in its second year.

Wagner, assistant professor of homiletics, is quick to credit Wickware, assistant professor of church and society and ethics, with the podcast idea, and it was he who applied for the Lyn C. and Stewart W. Herman Jr. Fund for Innovation in Theological Education that made it financially feasible. The grant came through in the summer of 2020, paying for equipment and the editing services of Fowler (spouse of 2021 graduate Reed Fowler), who Wagner and Wickware agree is far more valuable than any piece of equipment. Or as they put it, “the most essential component.”

While the pandemic was forcing LSTC to launch remote learning and use technological terms such as

synchronous and asynchronous, these two colleagues and friends jumped into the popular world of podcasts.

Most MDiv students take both Wagner’s Ministerial Leadership I class and Wickware’s Public Church I class back-to-back their first year.

“We wanted to provide continuity for students as they go from one course to the other so they’d feel like they had professors who were with them the whole year,” Wickware said. “We wondered what could we do that would be useful... we were each teaching by ourselves and given free rein. These two courses felt like they should fit together, but we had no real sense on how they’d build together.”

But it didn’t take long for them to find out. In addition to the benefit of collaboration (these classes have previously been team-taught), they believe the podcast created a learning, spiritual

community, something especially needed in a global pandemic.

Podcast as lecture

For their three-hour classes, An Incomplete Field Guide to Ministry provided 60 minutes of content—an opening conversation between the two hosts, guests on relevant topics, and a chance for listeners to email questions, comments or concerns the hosts responded to in “real time.”

For Wagner’s fall course, the podcast served as part of the asynchronous class lecture material and students listened to it prior to class (it dropped a week prior). Wickware used it in his class to have public theological conversations about a range of issues. “We leaned heavily into interviews to introduce students to people doing different kinds of ministries,” he said.

“What was helpful was the continuity piece, and the asynchronous content, which I relied on heavily,” Wagner said. “That was a lovely way for students to engage the conversation outside the classroom, through the podcast, and then bring those conversations into the Zoom room. What surprised us was how it took on a life beyond the classroom.

“That was the imagination of it: asynchronous content meets continuity between the two courses, meets building relationships with this class and two professors they were going to have back-to-back.”

They did 18 episodes the first year, having set out to do one for every week of class until they

realized that wasn't always feasible. In both recording the podcast and setting it in motion, they tried to remain unstressed and flexible.

The room where it happens

The podcast "studio" for the 2020-21 academic year was a small second floor classroom, set up with three long tables, three microphones and three headsets. The hosts sat 10 feet apart, with a big screen that everything fed into. With the campus and the city mostly on lockdown, they rarely had in-person guests, except for

President Jim Nieman and a few students. Most guests Zoomed in. Frantisek Janak provided tech support—he got them started, sat outside the room and popped back in as needed.

"Marvin and I would sit across from each other in the room, masked," Wagner explained. "It was life-giving to be in person with Marvin, using body language and having eye-contact and dialogue. I don't know that we would have produced something of quality if we hadn't been in a room together. The first part [of the podcast] is truly a conversation. We're talking to each other, nodding and receiving what the other is saying and responding to one another."

Over time, as they got more comfortable and as life unfolded, there were key topics that needed to be attended to, she said. They shifted to more contemporary concerns

which aligned with Public Church I.

"Our work and our interests and our theological perspectives don't preclude what's going on in the world," Wagner said. "So if our topic was the power of listening, we're still going to talk about contemporary events, we're still going to talk about them in conversation about what's going on in the world. We also had to be nimble with our interviewees. We kept questions wide open and the guests were amazing. They would take us in all kinds of directions and we'd follow up with questions we

hadn't written down and planned."

Flexibility became key, Wickware said. Even if they had a list of several questions prepared for guests, they'd sometimes ask just one, and the guest would respond with the perfect story so that suddenly it was a wrap.

"We had no need to ask anything else," Wickware said, as they laughed at the memory of just such an

ideal interview with Erik Christensen, pastor to the community.

But telling one another they had what they wanted wasn't always easy. To communicate, they waved their arms at each other and communicated through a Google doc, until Fowler told them they had to stop typing because it was showing up on the audio file.

"Marvin and I talk with our hands. And sometimes we bang on the table, which turns out to be loud in the microphone," Wagner said, laughing. "Eric told us to sit on

our hands and that we cannot keep touching the table. Eventually we put blankets on the table. Eric has been one of the most understanding and kind humans with us because we clearly don't know what we're doing with sound engineering."

Surprised and delighted

Both Wagner and Wickware were surprised and delighted by the response to *An Incomplete Field Guide to Ministry*: "People who weren't compelled to listen by a syllabus listened," they joked.

And listeners responded—alumni, those in the LSTC community, even students away on internship tuned in regularly—and wrote to them or told them they're listening. They believe alums and interns, especially, feel it connects them to the school.

The podcast had more than 1,200 downloads, 37% in Chicago, but also in 12 states other than Illinois as well as in France and Germany. "For a little old dinky ministry podcast, that's pretty good," Wagner said. They were also surprised at how much they can get into a 20-minute interview, and the depth of their discussions. "Rich content in such short time. And no one has said no to our invitation," Wagner said.

Podcast affects teaching

Doing a podcast has changed the way both professors teach.

"It made me appreciate this kind of dialog with colleagues and students," Wagner said. "I loved the practice of sitting down each week with Marvin and thinking theologically."

"As academics, we do a lot of thinking and writing. But with the podcast we got to do this in person. The back and forth, push and pull of producing ideas and wrestling with ideas and what's going on in the world and thinking theologically about it... This has encouraged me to cultivate that kind of dynamic in the classroom even more than I already did."

Wagner said it has reminded her of

It made me appreciate this kind of dialog with colleagues and students. I loved the practice of sitting down each week with Marvin and thinking theologically.

Kimberly Wagner, *assistant professor of homiletics*



Kim Wagner and Marvin Wickware, ready to Zoom in a guest on a September podcast.

the joy of deep dialogue, but also the challenge of doing it technologically: “How do I create dialogical in a Zoom room?” She wants to better model this dialogue in class, not just among students but also in bringing in more guests/colleagues.

Because she had to prepare each week to say things into a microphone, she believes it sharpened her theological thoughts so she was better able to articulate those in the classroom.

For Wickware, discussion is much more comfortable than lecture. He says with good humor, “that’s too much of me talking. The imposter syndrome lingers on even among those who have PhDs.

“I don’t like to do lectures. I don’t like writing them, I don’t like giving them, and I don’t like watching students slowly die inside as they listen to them. It’s not something I find to be a useful tool in my toolbox.”

He prefers to hear what his students have been reading and

what they have to say, but also understands that they also want to know what he thinks. The podcast has made him want to block 15 minutes of unstructured time at the end of class for his response to what has happened in class.

Essentially, it’s taught them both to continue to look for ways to incorporate what they love: having conversations.

This year they are doing an episode every other week, not attached to the two courses. Instead, they highlight people from LSTC, alumni who are doing effective ministry, and introduce student guests. As they cast this wider net, they hope to engage community, build connections and respond to what’s going on in the world. They’re even open to your suggestions for guests or topics. Just contact Lstcpodcast@gmail.com.

“We’re giving smart people a lovely platform to talk,” Wagner said. ❁

Six takeaways

- 1 It takes a village to do a podcast
- 2 People can share deeply in a short amount of time
- 3 The gift of community that has been cultivated around this project
- 4 The way the spring class begins with a community already formed—they know the professor
- 5 It has been about *process*, not perfection
- 6 Surprised how well things worked!

From the December 2020 episode of An Incomplete Field Guide to Ministry, shared through buzzsprout.com and other podcast apps.

JI BU

From Myanmar to Chicago to become a theologian

By Christopher Rajkumar


Ji Bu is only a few months into her studies at LSTC, but is eager to share gratitude for the chance to be here. Bu was born and brought up in the Mungbaw Village along the China hill border in Myanmar, the eighth child of a Kachin Baptist minister.

Her village was in a politically sensitive border zone where she often heard gunshots. She was a bright student and her village schooling could not meet her demands for learning. Her parents wanted her to excel in her studies to support the family, but her father and his life and ministries inspired her to choose full-time ministry.

Bu carried with her a love for her Kachin community and their social and spiritual development. As an undergraduate theological student, she developed a desire for advanced theological academia and went to India to further her theological studies.

She wants to reach the Burmese churches with theological education, so she was advised to come to the United States to pursue her theological education. She had no clue where to go and how to proceed, but her friend Seng Tsin Nan, a PhD student at LSTC, suggested she apply to LSTC.

Bu was admitted to the masters of arts (MA) at LSTC with a full tuition scholarship.



Ji Bu is a master of arts student at LSTC who hopes to return to Myanmar to teach theology.

“I could not imagine my life here in the U.S. without this scholarship,” she said. “Without this scholarship, I could not have come to the U.S.A. and be exposed to the world’s best academia.”

She hopes to be a PhD student as well one day. She expressed gratitude to the unknown donors who contributed towards the scholarship for students like her from the global

JUAN PEREA

Taking distance learning to a new level

By Julie B. Sevig

To say Juan Manuel Arias Perea is taking an unusual path to his MDiv degree at LSTC is an understatement. Perea, who is Cuban, was a pastor for five years in his home county—a small, rural congregation he misses.

But he now lives in Russia with a sister. He’s taking four classes at LSTC, but his “days” begin at 10 p.m. and end at 1 a.m. due to the nine-hour time difference. He can’t say enough about his professors and classmates—several of whom sent him emails when he wasn’t in class because he was sick.

One day, he hopes to study in

person at LSTC, and serve in the ELCA. It may mean obtaining a visa in a third country since the American embassy in Russia is closed.

“I am trying to find answers in my inner life,” he said. “I understand God loves me and walks alongside me and he will open any door to me.”

A door began to open for Perea when he heard a bishop in Cuba describe the inclusivity and welcome of the Lutheran church in America. The message resonated with him.

He says LSTC and the Metropolitan Chicago Synod have told him “you have a place here, you are affirmed, we need people like you, the church needs you.”

“Even at a distance I feel connected... I have found family, I have found home in the ELCA, they have been so eager to help. It’s so good when you come from a place so toxic, when speech and action are completely divorced, and don’t show love... I realized this was the place that I should be to train me theologically to become a minister within the ELCA. I feel and see at LSTC a very strong spirit of community and I am happy to be a part of this big family.”

From Russia, Perea is even able to be a Public Church Fellow, providing Spanish translation for worship services to a congregation in Pennsylvania.

“We are God’s hands in the



south churches, saying, “You are investing your prayerful resources in the churches and Christians in Myanmar, thus helping us to grow spiritually and academically.”

She hopes to return to Myanmar as a theological educator to strengthen the churches. ✿

Rajkumar is an MA student from Madurai, India. He is also a student worker for Marketing and Communications.



Juan Manuel Arias Perea, a native of Cuba, is a remote learner with several challenges, included a nine-hour time difference for Zooming in from Russia.

world and I speak both languages and I told them I will help your ministry. Technology can connect people wherever you are.” ✿

KILIAN SCHRENK

A voyage to study, learn and experience American Lutheranism

By Christopher Rajkumar

Kilian Schrenk, 23, came from Wurttemberg, Germany to Chicago for a semester as an exchange student at LSTC to learn and experience Lutheran theology in contexts.

Schrenk first had dreams of becoming a medical doctor, but he was also influenced by his family’s Christian faith. Schrenk was baptized and confirmed in the *Südgemeinde* in his hometown of Heilbronn.

While he was studying medicine, he realized it was not his preferred area of vocation and he began searching for something that felt truer for him. He was more attracted to the theology, life and work of his church. He has decided to study theology at the University of Tübingen, Germany, in a program comparable to an MDiv degree. Since Germany is the birthplace of Lutheranism and Reformation, Schrenk is curious to contextualize Lutheran theology, its presence, and its relevance to life in different contexts.

Significantly, he developed an interest in knowing how Lutheranism functions and contributes to the local communities in cosmopolitan contexts of the U.S., for instance, where a variety of nationalities and races live together.

“There is culture and a different background in Chicago,” he said. “It has long been my dream to spend a semester in the U.S. This different background includes key issues like racism, sexism and more. In this respect, I certainly



Kilian Schrenk, from Germany, was studying medicine when he realized his true vocation is ministry.

have so much to learn, understand and to work on.”

In Chicago, he wants to learn about the impact and relevance of Reformation Lutheran theology among the American churches. He believes what he’s learning at LSTC is different, creative, contextual, appropriate, and unique with academic accreditations and recognitions. After only a month, he believes LSTC helps students to “experience theology.”

Like other international students who have inspired LSTC to inspire others, Schrenk is on a voyage to do the same. ✿



Vance Blackfox

Shifting the narrative of mission and service

By Jan Boden

From an early age, Vance Blackfox (2012, MATS) felt a call to help others feel included. Blackfox has fulfilled that call in many different roles across the church: as a youth leader and a director of youth programs, in positions at Women of the ELCA and Augsburg Fortress Publishers, at California Lutheran University and at LSTC.

Now he is serving in a new position within the ELCA: desk director for American Indian Alaska Native Tribal Nations.

This new position is a significant change for the ELCA. By creating a desk director for American Indian Alaska Native Tribal Nations, the ELCA is recognizing Indigenous people as sovereign nations. This position is similar to desk directors relating to different regions around the world serving ELCA Global Mission.

In his new role, Blackfox will be building relationships with tribes and tribal leaders while partnering with and supporting the Indigenous and Native ministries

Vance Blackfox smudges Bishop Megan Rohrer, Sierra Pacific Synod, at their installation. Rohrer is the first openly trans bishop of the ELCA, and any U.S. Christian denomination.

that have existed and been working in Indian Country for many years.

“The ELCA needs to support the work that Native people are doing through organizations like Boarding School Healing Coalition and the National Congress of American Indians,” Blackfox said. “How does the church partner in a way that’s helpful and healthy and as an advocate of justice or maybe even a host of activists? The church must move beyond its paternalistic patterns with Native peoples and communities, deleting the imbalance, and instead embrace the opportunities to learn from the knowledge and great wisdom that Indigenous people have to offer. What a great way to build healthy and right relationships with us that would be.”

He started the new position in August, ending the first extended break he’s had from work since he was 13 years old. He finished his work with the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition in April. Although he enjoyed his time off, he didn’t stop working for inclusion and healing.

Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery

One major effort toward healing is the ELCA’s repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery. Over the last year, Blackfox was part of a

large group of ELCA leaders called together by the presiding bishop to begin the work on how the church will take action on repudiation.

“There are some powerhouse leaders in the ELCA taking part in the conversation,” he said. “I’d like to think that the Creator gave us some inspiration before some of the particular and major issues nationally came about. This gives us energy to be more connected to the organizations, tribes and the leaders in Indian Country who are already addressing challenges like missing and murdered Indigenous women and boarding school healing. The church is listening to Native voices again, like mine, who are saying, ‘We’ve got to make some moves here.’ Overall, the ELCA is doing some great things to get us in position. We’re not doing the things yet, but we’re doing some things to get us ready for what we’re going to be doing.”

Other+Wise

Inclusion and healing are part of the work Blackfox does with Other+Wise, an immersion program for youth and young adults that he germinated when he was director of Youth in Mission at LSTC. He is encouraged by the support the program has received from congregations over the last years.



Vance Blackfox is the ELCA desk director for American Indian Alaska Native Tribal Nations.

“We always include an indigenous element in all of our programming, even if it is a more broadly constructed program, like Denver’s urban focus or the history of the border and borderlands in Texas. What’s first? The Indigenous element. People are showing up and are excited by learning and are taking to heart some of the things that me and others have been saying: ‘Receive this wisdom, receive this gift. Know that we are still not selfish with it. Just don’t abuse it and don’t appropriate it’” Blackfox said.

Other+Wise is also a sponsor of the Vine Deloria Jr. Theological Symposium at LSTC.

Vine Deloria Jr. Theological Symposium at LSTC

Blackfox also remains committed to producing the Vine Deloria Jr. Theological Symposium at LSTC. He founded the symposium 13 years ago.

“I care about Vine, and I care about

white people knowing about Vine and what he did for Indian people,” he said. “Vine certainly opened doors for me when he was alive but has been equally impactful and important to my journey since he walked on. He continues to offer me incredible gifts that keep coming, keep appearing. I feel that way about the gifts he offers the Church and the world, that maybe they don’t see yet. He was one of the most prolific philosophers we have in the United States and he was a Lutheran theologian. He’s ours and I don’t think we, as Lutherans, know what we have.

“We really miss [deceased faculty member] Gordon Straw’s knowledge and expertise. The symposium was part of his dream as a Vine scholar, as well.”

Last year the symposium moved from in-person to Zoom and livestreamed on Facebook due to the pandemic. All 2021 sessions (Nov. 16–17) were available online.

The two-day event focuses on a different theme each year. This year’s was the intersection of Indian boarding schools and theological and Christian education with panel discussions by Native leaders, “learning lunches,” and United Lutheran Seminary President R. Guy Erwin delivering the keynote lecture.

Modeling our mission after Jesus

It is in Blackfox’s theology of mission as relationship building that all of his commitments converge.

“Mission is about relationship building. Our mission has to be modeled after Jesus. And Jesus’ sense of service had everything to do with making sure that people felt loved and included. We shouldn’t interpret the moments that he fed people as service. When Jesus fed people, it was to bring them to community, to empower the least,” he said.

The paternalistic approach to mission is rooted in the Doctrine of Discovery and an inability to understand that mission really is about relationships. For too long mission has been bound up in racism, disrespect of creation and other forms of brokenness,” he said.

“Jesus was very much a tribal person. In the feeding stories, for me, Jesus wasn’t serving the people. Jesus is, like, ‘These are my people. Why wouldn’t I feed my family?’ It wasn’t, ‘I’m me and I’m going to serve them.’ It was, ‘This is us. We’re all hungry. I have the power to take care of this, so I’m going to do it.’ Just like our grandmas do in our Indian churches. They turn nothing into something every Sunday. And not because they’re serving anybody. No, they too are thinking, ‘It’s my family, it’s my church family. We’re hungry, we’ve got to eat. I have the ability to take care of this so I’m going to do it.’ So how do we shift the narrative and stop justifying this unhealthy way of doing service to people? Instead, we need to do mission in a new but very old way by building good and healthy relationships with one another.” ✨

Boden is public relations manager.

A life of faithfulness



Lois and Bill Williams' giving made the ordinary extraordinary

By Bill Myatt

The great Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel once said, “It takes three things to attain a sense of significant being: God, a soul and a moment. And the three are always there.”

For Lois and Leon “Bill” Williams, the wisdom of Rabbi Heschel is lived out in faithfulness to each other, to their church and family, and to the causes they’ve cared about. Their mutual love blossomed into multiple blessings on the people and organizations around them. Together, they made the ordinary extraordinary.

Lois died in October of 2019, but now Bill (as his friends and family call him), motivated by her habit of joyful giving, continues her legacy. Among the many organizations that have benefited from their generosity is LSTC. They were consistent annual donors since well before the electronic giving records at LSTC began, and as a gesture of continuing that legacy of giving, they included LSTC in their estate plans. It is symbolic of their broader commitment to faithful generosity.

Bill served in the Navy in World War II. Upon his return, he joined many others who came back to the United States hoping to find a life partner. Though he went searching high and low, Bill couldn’t find the right person. So he prayed. Bill asked for a woman who, in his words, “Loved the Lord.”

Then, Bill says, “God gave me Lois.”

Symbolizing a value they would carry well into old age, Bill and Lois began a journey of faithful service—first to each other. And that faithfulness unfolded year after year into gifts for others. Their four

children (Barbara, Bruce, Doug and Katherine) enjoyed the security of loving parents. Their church (Trinity Lutheran in Kirkwood, Mo.) was blessed with the happy presence of two dedicated volunteers. And LSTC, like the many organizations they support, benefited.

Lois served on the Women of the ELCA board, helped organize the annual Scandinavian smorgasbord at their church, volunteered on the prayer chain, taught Sunday school, and joined fellow parishioners as an OWL (Older Wiser Lutheran!). She started a quilting group that is still active today. In the workplace, Bill was a dedicated engineer for more than 40 years, illustrating his commitment to longevity and faithfulness.

Bill and Lois give to LSTC because it is a place where their values as faithful Lutherans are continued in the students who will one day become church leaders. Their impact on the future did not occur through a single event. There has not been much fanfare. In many ways, Bill and Lois’s giving was incredibly ordinary. But it is not an overstatement to say that without consistent generosity of supporters like Bill and Lois, LSTC would not be able to train future leaders.

They made the ordinary extraordinary. They found what Heschel called “significant being.” They loved their God in the very depths of their souls. And their consistent, soul-filled love was returned in infinite moments of God’s very presence—a presence they will pass on to others well beyond their moments on earth. ❁

Myatt is director of philanthropic engagement.



Richard Vivian was named vice president for finance and operations beginning Sept. 1, approved by the board of directors and appointed by President James Nieman. Vivian had served as interim since April.

“I am delighted that Richard now steps into this senior leadership role at our school with all of his insight, clarity, and professionalism,” Nieman said. “As controller, he was already familiar with the many challenges our small but complex school faces. Now I’m glad that his wisdom will inform larger strategic decisions for the seminary. Richard’s collegiality sets a positive tone in so many situations.”

Vivian, who said he was “honored and humbled” by this appointment, has nearly 20 years of experience in financial analysis and accounting with both nonprofit and for-profit institutions. He began his career working for DePaul University’s Office of the Treasurer. He went on to work for Tribune Broadcasting, Infrastructure Engineering and Catharsis Productions. He holds a bachelor of commerce degree from DePaul University, Chicago, Ill., and studied at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Ill.



Vima Courvertier-Cruz was appointed director of diversity, equity, inclusion and justice, a new leadership position in the office of the president and part of LSTC’s strategic commitment to

become an authentically diverse and equitable school. In his announcement to the community, James Nieman, president, wrote that “the position is empowered to provide broad oversight, bring a strong voice, advise clear action, and offer needed critique to produce real change.”

He reminded the community that the hard work of building diversity, equity, inclusion and justice doesn’t fall to one person. Couvertier-Cruz previously served as LSTC admissions recruiter.



Debra Cronin joined the staff in September as director of educational and information technologies. She will lead and coordinate

all information technology systems and services, including integrating technologies to support, enhance and extend learning. She previously worked for Streamline Healthcare Solutions, Little City Foundation, City Colleges of Chicago and Georgia Perimeter College. As a lifelong learner, she is currently in the process of completing her third masters degree with an emphasis in educational technology.



Moose Flores joined the staff as admissions counselor in September. He will travel locally and nationally to counsel prospective students regarding their vocations in ministry and will provide them with information regarding LSTC’s programs and how they may be a good fit for the institution. He earned an MDiv from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminary).

Faculty and staff with new responsibilities or promotions

Abimbola Brown, now operations and student employment manager, oversees main building room scheduling, mailroom operations and student employment.

Sarah Burdick is now advancement operations associate, focusing on donor relations and stewardship, prospect research and special projects.

Erik Christensen now serves under a revised title as pastor to the community and director of strategic initiatives to align with his role in developing and implementing directional goals and plans for the seminary.

Kurt Hendel is interim director of Advanced Studies during Mark Swanson’s sabbatical.

Richard Moore and **Kiri Robinson** joined the Refectory team as part-time food services assistant (Richard) and part-time line cook (Kiri). Moore was on the staff pre-pandemic. Robinson, who attended Washburne Culinary Institute, was previously a nutrition coordinator at Bright Horizons. She learned to cook at age 13 by watching the Food Network.

Mike Reese, first a contract employee in finance and then named senior project manager in 2020, has been named controller.

Godspeed

Eliseo Pérez-Álvarez, associate professor of Lutheran Systematic Theology and Global Lutheranism since Jan. 1, announced in August his resignation, effective Dec. 31. In a letter to the LSTC community, he said his decision was based on health issues, a lack of jobs in Chicago for his wife, and the unsustainability of keeping two households.

Erin Haddad-Null, who served as advancement operations coordinator since September 2019, left her position in June. She began working with LSTC in 2018 through Careers in Nonprofits.

Renee Fisher, part-time line cook since July 2019, left the Refectory staff over the summer.

Tim Knutson resigned from his position as maintenance and renovation technician. He began full time work in LSTC maintenance in 2010 and prior to that worked at LSTC during several summers as part of the team preparing apartments for move in. During his years of service he was onsite emergency maintenance person, led grounds maintenance, renovated apartments, and responded to thousands of maintenance work orders, said Bob Berridge, senior project manager, facilities.

1961

Glenn Bergmark (Augustana Seminary, MDiv), who was ordained June 18, 1961, in Seattle, Wash., congratulates other members of his class now celebrating 60 years of ministry. They were the last class of the Augustana Lutheran Church.

Donald R. Strandlund (MDiv), at 91 is the oldest living member of the Class of 1961. He occasionally conducts devotions at a senior center in Cullman, Ala. He and his wife attend the local Episcopal church.

1967

Donald Koepke (MDiv) has joined with others who minister to older adults to develop a certificate program in spirituality and aging that’s offered through the New Theological Seminary of the West.

1969

Erv Uecker (MDiv) and his husband are celebrating 65 years together. They are the longest partnered/married same sex couple in the state of Wisconsin. They were legally married in their church, Pilgrim UCC, Grafton Wis., seven years ago. They preferred a private ceremony, but their pastor invited the whole congregation and then served dinner. Over 250 attended.

1973

Stephen Bouman (Christ Seminary-Seminex, MDiv) published “A trail of altars: Signs of crisis and hope for immigrants and refugees,” in the June/July issue of *Living Lutheran*.

1980

Ron Glusenkamp (Christ Seminary-Seminex, MDiv) is serving as interim pastor at Desert Hills Lutheran Church in Arizona. He was featured in a June 12 *Green Valley News* article, “Meet the temp: He eases the transition as Desert Hills looks for new pastor.”

1982

Jerry Koch (MDiv) has published “Christian universities as moral communities: Drinking, sex, and drug use among university students in the United States.” The article appears in *The Social Science Journal* (Taylor and Francis) and is also available through drjkoch.org. He is professor of sociology at Texas Tech University.

1986

Cindy Ford Breed (MDiv) and **Thomas Edwards Breed** (MDiv; 2006, DMin) marked their 35th anniversary of graduation and ordination, and T. Edwards' 15th anniversary of receiving his doctor of ministry degree with a gift to provide financial aid to LGBTQ MDiv students. Cindy plans to retire in January after 25 years as the Lutheran chaplaincy outreach chaplain at The University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics, Iowa City, Iowa. Although "officially" retired since 2014, T. Edwards is completing a five-year interim pastorate at Saint John Lutheran Church, Olin, Iowa, and Zion American Lutheran Church, Wyoming, Iowa.

1992

Thadius "Ted" Platt (MDiv) began a new call in November as pastoral associate at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Pawtucket, R.I. He is also chaplain at Scandinavian Skilled Nursing and Assisted Living Communities, Cranston, R.I.

1995

Mercedes Garcia Bachmann (ThM; 1999, PhD) was one of five Latin American women theologians who received an honorary degree Aug. 26 from Faculdades EST, one of Brazil's leading centers of education and research. Garcia Bachmann was honored for her work in lay and ordained leadership training and is well known in ecumenical circles for her work with Latin America's different faith communities.

Heidi Hyland Mann (MDiv) is a freelance editor working primarily with Augsburg Fortress, Fortress Press, and the other imprints of 1517 Media. One of her roles for Augsburg Fortress is editor of the quarterly devotional publication *Christ in Our Home*. Since fall 2020 she has also provided copyediting services for *Gather*, the magazine of Women of the ELCA.

David Vasquez Levy (MDiv; 2002, DMin) was a guest on the May 16 live interactive podcast "This Is Crucial — Let's talk about Immigration" hosted by First Presbyterian Church of Dallas. He is president of the Pacific School of Religion and regularly contributes a faith perspective to the national conversation on immigration, including speaking at a congressional briefing, participating in two immigration consultations with the Obama

White House, and recently engaging in a series of public conversation with various states attorneys across the country to reframe our national conversation about immigration.

2002

Carmelo Santos (MDiv; 2004, ThM; 2010, PhD) published "A season of listening: Pentecost is a time to hear diverse voices," in the May issue of *Living Lutheran*. He is ELCA director for theological diversity and ecumenical and interreligious engagement.

2006

Neal Anthony (ThM; 2008, PhD) published his second book, *Promising Nothing: Christology Suspended from the Cross* (Pickwick, 2021). The book is dedicated to Vitor Westhelle.

Anthony Bateza (MDiv) published "Lutherans as 'political animals'" in the May issue of *Living Lutheran*. He is associate professor of religion at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn.

Steven Cauley (MDiv) began a new call as senior pastor at Living Lord Lutheran Church in Lake St. Louis, Mo. He completed a doctor of ministry degree at Luther Seminary.

Linda Norman (MDiv) was recently elected to the board of directors for the Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society, the nation's largest non-profit provider of senior care and support services. She is the chief financial officer and vice president of administration at Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA. In that role she is quoted in the June/July *Living Lutheran* article, "A pandemic 'lifeline': ELCA financial institutions coordinate PPP response."

Sara Olson-Smith (MDiv) wrote and created a video series for the September Gather Bible study, "The gift of the Holy Spirit," for the Women of the ELCA. The videos are available on YouTube.

2007

Amy Lindeman Allen (MDiv) published a review of *Object Bodies in the Gospel of Mark* by Manuel Villalobos in the July issue and a review of *The First Biography of Jesus: Genre and Meaning in Mark's Gospel* by Helen K. Bond in the October issue of *Currents for Theology and Mission*.

2008

Melissa Bills (Lutheran Year) is serving as director of college ministries and college pastor at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa.

Tom Gaulke (MDiv; 2017, ThM; 2020, PhD) is now the part-time clergy organizer for The People's Lobby. He continues as part-time pastor of Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Cicero, Ill. He published *An Unpromising Hope: Finding Hope outside of Promise for an Agnostic Church and for Those of Us who Find it Hard to Believe* (Wipf and Stock Publishers).



Tom Gaulke was excited to unveil his new book to the social media crowd.

2009

Emily Carson (MDiv), director for evangelical mission for the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, is quoted in the June/July *Living Lutheran* article, "Trusted stewards: Assessment offers evaluations, best practices."

Erin Clausen (MDiv) in July began a new call as senior pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Schaumburg, Ill.

Angela Khabeb (MDiv) was quoted in a June 3 KSTP/ABC-5 (Minneapolis) news report on barriers being removed from George Floyd Square and in a June 23 report on the collection of community impact statements prior to the sentencing of Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd. She published "Grounded in Grace" columns in the June/July, August, and September issues of *Living Lutheran*.

2010

Jessica Harren (MDiv), with River Cook Needham, published "Coming Out: A Theological Dialogue of Queerness and Ability" in the July issue of *Currents in Theology and Mission*.

Brian Wise (MDiv) was recently elected to serve as the ELCA representative on the interfaith forum for the action of justice team within the Lutheran World Federation. The forum will coordinate and support LWF member churches' engagement on climate justice, interfaith and peace. He was featured in a July 9 article in the Chicago suburban news, *The Daily Herald*.

2011

Elisabeth (Zant) Daniels (MDiv) is now pastor at First Lutheran Church in Gladstone, Mich.

2012

Vance Blackfox (MATS) is now the desk director for American Indian Alaska Native Tribal Nations for the ELCA. See the article on page 14.

2015

Lydia Hernandez-Marcial (ThM; 2020, PhD) is now serving as professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at the Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico.

Jasmine Tesdahl (MAM) began her 11th year in the United States Air Force Reserve where she is a chaplain. She also serves as associate pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Hickory, N.C.

2016

Francisco Herrera (ThM) organized and participated in the online panel discussion, "Luther, Lutheranism and Socialisms? On Ministry and Economic Justice," held Sept. 15. The recording is available on LSTC's YouTube channel.

Baiju Markose (ThM; 2019, PhD) published the book, *The Cross and the Peacock: Poems* (Delhi: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge).

Crystal Silva McCormick (ThM) received the Hispanic Theological Initiative/Lilly Fellowship for 2021–2022. The award includes working with a professional editor on her dissertation and writing and professional development workshops.

2017

Tobita Chow (MDiv) participated in the panel discussion “Luther, Lutherisms and Socialisms? On Ministry and Economic Justice.” He is the global labor organizer and director of Justice Is Global.

Sam Nelson (MDiv) married Alissa Lee July 16.



Janelle Neubauer (MDiv) in July began as new call as college chaplain at Muhlenberg College. She recently completed a call as country coordinator in Rwanda for the ELCA’s Young Adults in Global Mission program. She also serves on the LSTC Antiracism Transformation Team. On Sept. 7, she married Simphiwe Charles Hlophpe (above).

Matthew Petersen (MDiv) contributed devotions to the July 2021 *Christ in Our Home*. He serves as a chaplain at Crossroads Hospice and Palliative Care, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Matt Zemanick (MDiv) is serving as chaplain to Chicago’s Southeast Environmental Justice Community. The call links community care, spiritual care and addressing environmental injustices. He also serves on the Illinois Poor People’s Campaign.

2018

Erin Coleman-Branchaud (MDiv) participated in the panel discussion “Luther, Lutherisms and Socialisms? On Ministry and Economic Justice.” She is pastor of St. Luke’s Lutheran Church in Logan Square, Chicago.

2019

Sweetie Helen Chukka (ThM) published sermon notes to Sermonlab.org for the 19th Sunday after Trinity. She is a facilitator of the online collective of theological and biblical scholars.



Kelsey Fauser (MDiv 2021), (front and center) surrounded by LSTC classmates.

River Cook Needham (ThM) was co-editor of the July issue of *Currents in Theology and Mission*: “Our Bodies are Sacred: Theology Beyond Cisgender Heterosexuality” in which there were several pieces from current LSTC students and alumni. She published three articles in that issue: “Toward a More Embodied Liberation: Theologically Integrating Racial Justice, Size Liberation, and Transgender Liberation;” with J. Pace Warfield-May, “Introduction to This Issue: A Mess Makes Us Free;” with Jessica Harren, “Coming Out: A Theological Dialogue of Queerness and Ability.”

Levi Powers (MDiv) published a letter to the editor, “LGBT Affirmation” in *Sweetwater NOW* (Sweetwater, Wyo.) on June 20. In it he quotes alum Neal Anthony, who served as his internship supervisor. Powers is pastor of Mount of Olives Lutheran Church.

Denise Rode (MDiv) was ordained May 22 at First Lutheran Church, DeKalb, Ill. He is pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Earlville, Ill.

Eddie A. Rosa Fuentes (ThM) published “Pulse and the Closet: Frameworks for an Eschatological Discourse” in the July issue of *Currents in Theology and Mission*.

Vinod Wesley (ThM) published the book *Church and Climate Justice* (Delhi: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge).

2020

Ole Schenk (MDiv), published a review of *Indigenous and Christian Perspectives in Dialogue: Kairotic Place and Borders* by Allen Jorgenson in the October *Currents for Theology and Mission*.

2021

Lilly Brellenthin (MDiv) was ordained Aug. 15 at Luther Valley Lutheran Church, Beloit, Wis., and is pastor of Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church, Walworth, Wis.

Kelsey Fauser (MDiv) was ordained at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Glenwood Springs, Colo., Sept. 16. She is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Colorado Springs, Colo.

Christina Jindra (MDiv) married Candelario Torres Aug. 28.

Kelsey Kresse (MDiv) was ordained Oct. 9, at the Memorial Chapel at the University in College Park, Md. She is associate pastor of Abiding Presence Lutheran Church, Burke, Va.

Robin Lovett-Owen (MDiv) was ordained Oct. 29 at Christ Lutheran Church, Nashville, Tenn., where she now serves as pastor. Her artwork of Jacob’s Ladder was featured on the cover of *Femme Salée*, a feminist and queer zine dedicated to discussion about the arts.

R. Kim Maschoff (MAM) was ordained to Word and Service ministry Oct. 16 at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Downers Grove, Ill.

Phil Potaczek (MDiv) was ordained Oct. 31 at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Rockford, Ill. He is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Ottawa, Ill.

Denise Rector (ThM) published “Divinely claimed: Your baptism is a portal into the body of Christ,” in the Sept./Oct. issue of *Gather*. She

was quoted extensively in the Oct. 11 *Columbus Dispatch* article, “Trinity Lutheran Seminary features womanist theologians in lectures, certificate program.” Rector is part of the planning process for the fall semester lecture series. Another series will be offered in January.

Ashley Rosa-Ruggieri (MDiv) and **Dalton Rosa-Ruggieri** (MDiv) were ordained Sept. 12 at Trinity Ecumenical Parish, Moneta, Va. Ashley is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Wauseon, Ohio; Dalton is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, Swanton, Ohio.

Aaron Silco (MDiv) and **Anna Silco** (MDiv) were ordained Sept. 14 in the Augustana Chapel at LSTC. They are pastors of Shishmaref (Alaska) Lutheran Church, the northernmost congregation in the ELCA.

Katrina Steingraeber (MDiv) was ordained Aug. 21 at Zion Lutheran Church, Rockford, Ill. She is associate pastor of St. Mark Lutheran Church, Rockford, Ill. She also represented LSTC in the 2021 Hein-Fry Book of Faith Challenge. She presented “Looking at Today’s World Through the Psalms” online Oct. 28.

Kirsten Wee (MDiv) was ordained Oct. 23 at Grace Lutheran Church in New Orleans, La. She is associate pastor of campus ministry and outreach at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Raleigh, N.C.

Anne Wickland (MDiv) was ordained Oct. 30 at Bethel Lutheran Church, Madison, Wis. She is associate pastor of children, youth and family ministry at Peace Lutheran Church in Waunakee, Wis.

Elle Dowd (MDiv, 2020) signs a copy of her book, *Baptized in Tear Gas*, at a book signing held at Grace Place in the South Loop of Chicago.



World Mission Institute is March 10

The 2022 World Mission

Institute is March 10 with George Sabra, professor of systematic theology and president of the Near East School of Theology (NEST), Beirut, Lebanon, as speaker.

At press time, COVID was continuing to threaten whether Sabra would be able to come to the United States for the Institute. ❁



George Sabra

Black History Month events being planned

Despite the pandemic, LSTC offered an abundance of ways to honor February's annual Black History Month in 2021. Planning for 2022 is expected to ramp up in November.

Check out our webpage (lstc.edu; click on events) for current details on upcoming events or scan the QR code on this page. ❁

During Black History Month in 2020 we were able to gather in person and learn about art from a local gallery.



Seminary Sampler March 7-9

We've barely finished our fall sampler and are already planning for spring.

During Seminary Sampler prospective students are offered the opportunity to meet faculty and fellow students, engage with LSTC alumni, explore LSTC housing and opportunities in Chicago (for those interested in living on or near campus), and learn about the LSTC's admissions process, including information about student services and financial aid. ❁

LSTC forms event steering and planning committees

In an effort to align seminary-sponsored events with the school's values and strategic priorities, LSTC has formed an event steering committee. The committee is developing policies and procedure to guide event planning and evaluation.

An event planning committee

is also being formed to be event producers and supporters, and in some cases, designers or creators. It will assist event hosts in executing and evaluating. In short, it's a year of transition into a new way of planning and evaluating events at LSTC. Stay tuned. ❁

Mark your calendars for Giving Day

April 5-6 are the days reserved for LSTC's annual Giving Day. Last year, some 300 donors raised more than \$150,000. Giving Day is largely an on-line event, but some events may also be held on campus. ❁

Katrina Steingraeber represents LSTC in Hein-Fry challenge

Katrina Steingraeber, 2021 MDiv graduate, represented LSTC in the annual Hein-Fry Book of Faith Challenge Oct. 28. Her presentation was called, "Looking at Today's World Through the Psalms."

Taking the challenges of the pandemic, racial injustice and the climate crisis into consideration, this year's theme was "Imagining Scriptural Encounters in the New Normal."



The annual challenge seeks to enliven the biblical engagement of the whole church by encouraging the development of faithful, innovative and effective ways to teach and learn Scripture. ❁

Scan here for more on events at LSTC



Dennis A. Anderson
1937–2021 | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1963*

Dennis Anderson died Sept. 23, in Genoa, Neb. He served the church in a variety of ways, including bishop of the Nebraska Synod 1987–90, and president (1990–2000) and faculty member (2000–2001) of Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio. He also served on LSTC's board of directors. Among other church positions, Anderson served the Board of Pensions, the Board of American Missions, and congregations in Texas, Illinois and Nebraska. He is survived by his wife Barbara, two children and four grandchildren.

Thomas M. BeMiller
1931–2021 | *Chicago Lutheran Theology Seminary Class of 1956*

Thomas M. BeMiller, 90, died Sept. 5 in Louisville, Ky. He served congregations in Michigan and Kentucky, and as interim in retirement along the South Carolina coast. BeMiller received an honorary doctor of divinity from Wittenberg University after multiple Indiana–Kentucky Synod leadership roles, and he contributed to interfaith community development in the Louisville area. He was preceded in death by his wife Mary–Louise BeMiller, and is survived by three daughters, eight grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren.

Walter Marvin Chellberg
1927–2021 | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1952*

Walter Chellberg, 94, died July 23 at his home in Paxton Ill. He served parishes in Minnesota, Illinois and Indiana. His first wife Maxine died in 1979 and his second wife Margaret died in 2010. He is survived by five children, three stepchildren, 22 grandchildren, 14 step grandchildren, 58 great grandchildren and 15 step great grandchildren.

Randy L. DeJaynes
1951–2021 | *Class of 1985*
Randy L. DeJaynes, 70, of Forsyth, Ill., died Aug. 18 after a COVID–19 infection resulted in pneumonia. DeJaynes was pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Decatur, Ill., for 16 years. He also owned Daily Bread Bakery for several years. He is survived by his wife Arlis, two sons and six grandchildren.

Thomas Eugene Hilger
1942–2021 | *Class of 1968*
Thomas Hilger, 79, of Lee's Summit, Mo., died Aug. 3. He served parishes in Illinois,

Wisconsin, Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma and Iowa. After retirement in 2008, he was an interim pastor in Oklahoma. Hilger was a member of the LSTC Board of Directors from 1991 to 1993. He was preceded in death by his wife Karen and son Mike. He is survived by three children and 11 grandchildren.

Joan E. Jacobson
1949–2021 | *Class of 1978*

Joan E. Jacobson (Wolf) died June 13 in Waukesha, Wis. Jacobson was known as a gifted preacher and pastored churches in Tennessee, Michigan and Wisconsin. She also served in several chaplaincy roles. She is survived by her husband Don, four children and four grandchildren.

Theodore Carl Johns
1939–2021 | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1965*

Ted Johns, 82, died Sept. 19 in Surprise, Ariz. His served parishes in Stoughton, Mass., Boston, San Diego, Phoenix and Minneapolis. When his wife's job took them to England, he worked for Children's Aid International assisting children in Russia with health issues caused by the catastrophic Chernobyl nuclear disaster. He is survived by his wife Marietta, three children and eight grandchildren.

Kazimierz Kowalski
1952–2021 | *Class of 1978*
Kazimierz Kowalski, 69, died Oct. 4 in New York. Although baptized in a Roman Catholic Church, he attended Lutheran schools, and served as a Lutheran pastor on Long Island and in Milwaukee. He returned to the Catholic Church in 1987 and was ordained by Cardinal John O'Connor at St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1991, after which he served in Catholic parishes in Manhattan.

David Frans Larson
1928–2021 | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1954, DMin 1978*
David Larson, 93, died June 29 in Eugene, Ore. He was a pastor in Texas, Colorado, Iowa, Montana, Oregon and California. He helped families fleeing unstable countries to settle in the U.S. and provided them a place to worship in their language. He had deep convictions for social justice. Larson is survived by three children and five grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife Wanda and two children.

Erling Lindstrom
1932–2021 | *Class of 1967*
Erling Lindstrom, 89, died Oct. 12 in Vancouver, B.C. He earned his Journeyman papers in auto body repair, but left his job in the garage to attend Bible school, college and seminary. He served parishes in Ontario, Canada. In retirement he served as a pulpit supply pastor throughout the lower mainland of B.C. He is survived by his wife Myrna.

Robert Eugene Linstrom
1928–2021 | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1955*
Robert Linstrom, age 93, of Elgin, Ill., died July 30. He served congregations in Minnesota, Indiana and Illinois for 66 years. He was also secretary of the Indiana–Kentucky Synod. Linstrom was preceded in death by his wife Marcene Juliet (Larson) Linstrom, and is survived by four sons, eight grandchildren and four great–grandchildren.

Carey Mack
1974–2021 | *Class of 2000*
Carey Gardiner Mack, 47, Ann Arbor, Mich., died Oct. 15 after a brief illness. Memorial services were held in her hometown of Watertown, Wis., and in Ann Arbor. Mack is survived by her mother, Josie Mack, and her brother John. She loved the St. Louis Cardinals, all things NPR, and always worked for fairness and equality.

Carl H. Obert
1934–2021 | *Chicago Lutheran Theology Seminary Class of 1962*
Carl Obert, 87, died Aug. 8 in The Villages, Fla. He served with the U.S. Army in Korea as a medic, and as pastor of Resurrection Lutheran Church and St. Luke's Lutheran Church in the Chicago suburbs. He is survived by his wife Jan, five children, 10 grandchildren and five great–grandchildren.

Julius L. Peterson
1928–2021 | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1956*
Julius L. Peterson, 93, died Sept. 4 in Red Oak, Iowa. He served congregations in Illinois and Iowa. While retired in Arkansas, Peterson helped start a church and served as a visitation pastor at another. He is survived by his wife Arlene, three sons, 11 grandchildren, three step–grandchildren and five great–grandchildren.

Hugo M. “Tex” Rathkamp
1930–2021 | *Central Lutheran Seminary Class of 1953*
Tex Rathkamp, 91, died Sept. 20 in Williamsburg, Va. He served as a pastor nearly 50 years in Auburn and Columbus, Neb., as a mission developer of St. John's Lutheran Church in Grand Prairie, Texas, and Trinity Lutheran Church in Columbus. He also was a chaplain for the Holland America cruise line. He is survived by his wife Ann, two children and seven grandchildren.

Margaret Lou Richards
1929–2021 | *Class of 1979*
Margaret Richards, 92, died July 9 in Stamford, Texas. After raising three daughters and a career as a teacher, she and her husband Clements took a leave from their farm in Texas and attended LSTC. They returned to Texas in 1979, she with an MA degree. She served as a Christian educator and taught in public schools. Her husband preceded her in death and she is survived by three daughters, five grandchildren and nine great–grandchildren.

Roger A. Rotvig
1931–2021 | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1956*
Roger Rotvig of Kennebunk, Maine, died Sept. 1 at age 90. He was a pastor in Caribou, Maine, Newport, R.I., and Hartford, Conn, as well as chief executive officer of New England Lutheran Social Services. He is survived by his wife Helen, four children, five grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren.

A. Carl Sharon
1954–2021 | *Class of 1984*
Carl Sharon, 66, died June 29 in Hamden, Conn. A graduate of MIT, he worked as an engineer before attending seminary. He served 24 years as the Lutheran campus pastor at Yale University. His love of campus ministry began when as a student at MIT he found support when his father died. He is survived by his wife Christy Reed Sharon and a son.

Dale R. Skogman
1939–2021 | *Class of 1965*
Dale Skogman, age 81, died on June 16 in Gladstone, Mich. Skogman was a parish pastor in Michigan and Wisconsin before being elected bishop of the Northern Great Lakes Synod. Skogman served on boards connected to LSTC and the Augustana Heritage Association. While he was bishop, the synod

helped construct a library in Tanzania at a secondary school where youth could complete high school and go on to college. In 2009, the reading room in the complex was named the “Bishop Dale Skogman Library.” He is survived by his wife Josephine, three children and nine grandchildren.

Paul Leroy Swedberg
1930–2021 | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1956*

Paul Swedberg, 91, died August 22 in Osseo, Minn. He began House of Prayer Lutheran Church in Seattle and Lutheran Church of the Master in Brooklyn Center, Minn., and served another congregation in Florida until retirement. He helped organize Fellowship of Evangelical Lutheran Laity and Pastors in the 1980s, was the first president of the Community Emergency Assistance Program in Minneapolis, helped organize an agency for Korean children in need of heart surgery, and led his congregation to build an orphanage in Haiti. He and his wife Carole raised five children and fostered more than 29.

Leslie Wassberg
1919–2021 | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1953*

Les Wassberg, 101, died June 19 in Moorhead, Minn. After serving in the Air Force during World War II, Wassberg used the GI bill to attend seminary. He served parishes in Minnesota and North Dakota and became the first full time chaplain at Dakota Hospital in Fargo, N.D. Wassberg held leadership positions with the Swedish Cultural Heritage Society and CROP Hunger Walk. He was preceded in death by his wife Eunice and his daughter, and is survived by three children, nine grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Charles Weiser
1937–2021 | *Class of 1992*
Charles “Chuck” H. Weiser, 84, died Oct. 22 in Reading, Pa. He graduated from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy of Kings Point, N.Y., and served in the United States Navy for many years, earning the rank of Lt. Commander. Later in life he completed his MDiv. He is survived by his wife Patricia, four children, four grandchildren, two great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren.



Mercedes Garcia Bachmann, distinguished affiliate faculty, is one of five renowned Latin American women from different Christian traditions who were awarded an honorary degree by Faculdades EST, one of Brazil’s leading centers of education and research. The award ceremony marked the 75th anniversary of the institute’s founding by the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IELCB) and the 30th anniversary of its chair of feminist theology. Garcia Bachmann specializes in lay and ordained leadership training and is well known in ecumenical circles for her work with Latin America’s different faith communities.

Tom Gaulke’s book, *An Unpromising Hope: Finding Hope outside of Promise for an Agnostic Church and for Those of Us who Find it Hard to Believe*, was released in September (Wipf and Stock Publishers). Gaulke is auxiliary faculty.

Phil Hefner, professor emeritus of systematic theology and senior fellow, Zygon center for Religion and Science, published “Homo sapiens: perched between giga, nano, and God” for Lutheran Alliance for Faith, Science and Technology’s blog.

Eunyoung Lim, assistant professor of New Testament, published her first monograph, *Entering God’s Kingdom (Not) Like a Little Child: Images of the Child in Matthew, 1 Corinthians, and Thomas*. She also wrote “Entering the Kingdom of Heaven Not like the Sons of Earthly Kings (Matthew 17:24–18:5)” for the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*. She taught a three-session online workshop with Lutheran School of Theology (St. Louis) in October and November.

Esther Menn, dean of academic affairs and Ralph W.

and Marilyn R. Klein Professor of Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, has been invited to serve on the Lutheran World Federation taskforce charged with creating a study document on Jewish Christian relations in advance of the LWF’s Thirteenth Assembly in Krakow, Poland in 2023. The Taskforce consists of Lutheran theologians from different regions brought together to engage each other and share reflections leading to a study document that will strengthen Lutherans around the world to grow in mutual learning, foster healthy Jewish-Christian relations, and strengthen a hopeful Christian witness in the public sphere.

Brooke Petersen (right) presents “I Will Never Leave You or Forsake You: Suicide Prevention for Beloved Children of God” for the Metropolitan Chicago Synodical Women’s Organization Convention. Also in October, she presented a workshop entitled “Facing Pandemic Grief and Trauma” for the Illinois/Wisconsin fall internship cluster retreat. Petersen is director of MDiv and MA programs, coordinator of candidacy and lecturer.

David Rhoads, emeritus, wrote “Scripture by Heart: Learning and Performing Biblical Passages for Worship – A Brief Tutorial” in the October *Currents for Theology and Mission*.

José David Rodríguez, emeritus, wrote a review of Óscar Romero’s *Theological Vision: Liberation and the Transfiguration of the Poor* by Edgardo Colón-Emeric in *Journal of Religion*.

Benjamin Stewart, Gordon A. Braatz Associate Professor of Worship and director of the Zygon Center for Religion and Science, spoke about his book, *A Watered Garden: Christian Worship and Earth’s Ecology*, at St. John’s Lutheran Church, Northfield, Minn. As a 2021 grant recipient, Stewart attended the 2021 Science for Seminaries workshop hosted by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He also wrote “Green burial as an act of faith” in the July 6 *Christian Century* magazine.

Mark Swanson, Harold S. Vogelhaar Professor of Christian-Muslim Studies and Interfaith Relations and associate director of A Center of Christian-Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice (CCME), wrote “Beyond Apologetics: The God and Jesus Project” in *More Than a Cup of Coffee and Tea: A Generation of Lutheran-Muslim Relationships*

(Pickwick Publications). He also wrote the foreword to *The Life of Bishoi: The Greek, Arabic, Syriac, and Ethiopic Lives* (American University in Cairo Press).

Linda Thomas, professor of theology and anthropology, was one of four panelists discussing “Crawford: The Man the South Forgot,” hosted by the San Antonio Black International Film Festival on Juneteenth (June 19). She also taught the online class, “Intersectionality,” offered by the Lutheran School of Theology, St. Louis, Mo., a group of teachers and lifelong learners in theological study, and another three-session class for them in October and November.



Sara Trumm, director of CCME, wrote “Re-Envisioning: A Center of Christian-Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice” in *More Than a Cup of Coffee and Tea: A Generation of Lutheran-Muslim Relationships* (Pickwick Publications).



Kimberly Wagner, assistant professor of homiletics and Axel Jacob and Gerda Maria (Swanson) Carlson Chair, discussed preaching and trauma as a guest on The Ministry Collaborative Podcast; reviewed *Tragedies and Christian Congregations: The Practical Theology of Trauma*, in *Reading Religion: A Publication of the American Academy of Religion*; published “Dead Ends, Opening Doors, and Wilderness Words: Preaching in and through a Pandemic,” *Call to Worship: Liturgy, Music, Preaching and the Arts*, “Worship in the Time of COVID.”

Marvin Wickware Jr., assistant professor of church and society and ethics, published “The Labour of Black Love: James Cone, Womanism and the Future of Black Men’s Theologies,” *Black Theology: An International Journal*; reviewed “Kristopher Norris, Witnessing Whiteness: Confronting White Supremacy in the American Church,” *Horizons*.

Blessing of the community's animals during worship to celebrate the Feast Day of St. Francis



New student Martha Ernest Ambarang'u celebrating her birthday at LSTC



Welcome back to campus celebration and activities





Music in the quad



Gathering for the Scherer Lecture



First worship (outside!) of the new academic year



Getting to know each other during orientation week



This year the resource fair was held outside



Lutheran School of Theology *at* Chicago

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In the spirit of St. Francis, the community gathered for worship in the quad to bless our pets.



FALL 2021