

First call process:  
'Holy chaos & holy wonder'

Speaking truth  
to the church

Reflections on  
antiracism transformation



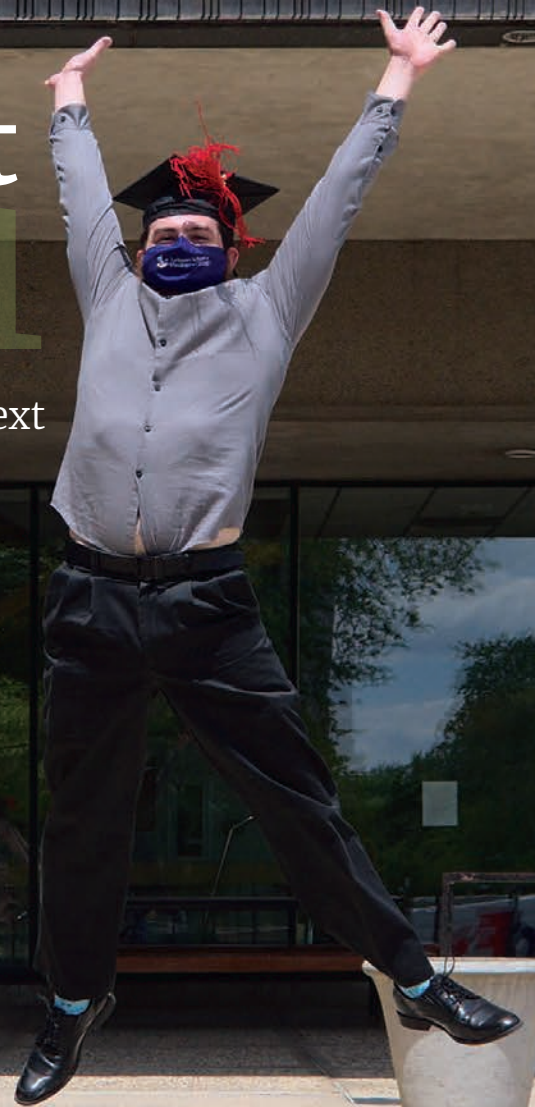
# epistle

SUMMER 2021

The magazine of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

## Commencement 2021

Jumping into what's next



Welcome!

BUILDINGS  
← OPEN  
← Deliveries  
Received

# The point of no return...

**Y**ou can barely see it. A softer hue appears on the horizon now, a glimmer of hope. After more than a year, the gloom of separation by disease is lifting for many of us. I say “for many of us” out of realism and concern. My realism is that the pandemic still rages on, exacting a toll on vulnerable and forgotten persons. Not everyone has reason for hope. My concern is that even for the healthy, the pandemic meant awful loss in silent, hidden ways. Hope was refracted through grief over those who died or treasured occasions quietly forsaken. Our hope is in muted tones, less a daybreak and more (as Vitor Westhelle loved to say) a gloaming.

Fixated on progress, we want to speed past these difficult days and figure out what will be (in the tired saying) the “new normal.” But that optimistic phrase masks a double deception. The first concerns whose normal is really valued, which is usually those with privilege and power. The second deception is that we can build tomorrow on the template of yesterday, a simple update made even better. But the challenge we face today is that the upheaval imposed by pandemic took one direction only. There was no chance for retreat, no means for reversal, no promise for recovery. Without knowing it, we passed the point of no return.

Maybe that’s actually a good thing. In our seminary and church, accepting and embracing irreversible change is leading to significant transformation like never before. There’s a freedom and energy when you realize you cannot go back. Instead of waiting to get back to business as usual, we are treating this odd time as a catalyst to rethink what we do as a school. The doors are wide open for us to imagine various changes, learning that in many cases these are not only welcome but also long overdue. This is a rare opportunity

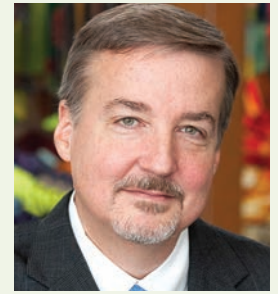
to reconsider our model and purpose that we cannot let slip by. Let me share a few of the ways I see this happening.

(1) When we resume in-person courses in the fall semester, we will already have fine, updated capacities to propel us into hybrid learning that seamlessly links the local classroom with remote learners. This isn’t about abandoning our in-person strengths. It simply signals our eagerness to enrich the formation of more kinds of participants and thereby extend the reach of our educational offerings.

(2) It turns out that none of our employees misses the commute to work (like that’s a surprise) and most can be at least as productive with a bit of flexibility and choice in how they work (rather than viewing these with suspicion). These are healthy trends we want to pursue, including how we could work in-person better and what sort of reimaged workplace we really need to explore.

(3) I am sensing a sort of holy impatience about our core purpose as a school. That’s not a repudiation of who we’ve been but simply asking whether we do things out of habit or because they reflect our distinctive gifts. It’s a wise and bold impulse for us to plan clearly where we can afford to expend our best energies, or reconfigure our commitments, or jettison what doesn’t belong.

These are only first steps, but I’ve not before heard us as ready to set aside the way things used to be and seek the future God holds for us. We’re done with reproducing the past. That’s the point of no return we’ve passed, its real purpose: to learn what we can now grasp hold of when we release our grip on what has always been. 🌱



James Nieman

This is a rare opportunity to reconsider our model and purpose that we cannot let slip by.



# epistle

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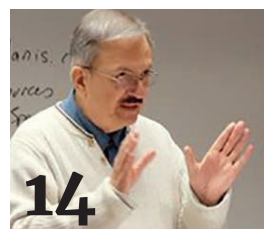
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# Linda E. Thomas appointed director of Pero Multicultural Center

**L**inda E. Thomas, professor of theology and anthropology, has been appointed director of the Albert “Pete” Pero Jr. Multicultural Center at LSTC, starting Jan. 1, 2022.

Thomas will bring to the Pero Center a new focus on intersectional scholarship and public discourse on religion, identity and democracy.

“I look forward to bringing an intersectional lens to this center, and to the possibilities of visionary ministry this center can foster,” Thomas said.

Esther Menn, dean of academic affairs said, “We look forward to celebrating the re-inauguration of the Pero Center next January. Guided by the creative vision of Dr. Thomas, the Pero Center will sponsor timely conferences and contribute thought leadership for the pursuit of equity in our church and society.”

Thomas researches, writes, speaks and teaches about the intersection and mutual influence of theology and culture from a



Linda E. Thomas

womanist perspective. She is particularly focused on the experience of African American women and is passionate about uncovering

and exploring historical and contemporary experiences and ideologies that govern actions, policies and norms that surround race, class and gender.

A member of the LSTC faculty since 2000, and one of the leaders in developing the public church curriculum, Thomas seeks to unite the academic study of theology for the church with service/justice work in the world. She incorporates multiple teaching and learning methods in the classroom. In addition to traditional sources, she regularly uses literature, music and film to provide variety and relevance for her students.

A well-published scholar and sought-after speaker, Thomas has given lectures at conferences around the world. She holds a PhD in anthropology from The American University in Washington, D.C.; an MDiv from Union Theological Seminary, New York, N.Y.; and a BA from Western Maryland College.

In 2005, LSTC became home to the ELCA-sponsored multicultural center. When it was no longer supported by the ELCA in 2010, it was renamed in honor of Albert “Pete” Pero Jr., the first African American faculty member at a North American Lutheran seminary. Cheryl Stewart Pero was appointed director and served until her retirement in June 2017. An advisory committee was formed in 2017 to re-envision the purpose and future of the Pero Center. Eddie Rose Furentes (program coordinator) and volunteers continued to provide programming and leadership. 🌱

## Echols Preaching Prize Celebration

**K**arl Anliker, a graduating senior, and Krystle Moraska, a middler, treated the LSTC community (and guests) to excellence in preaching during the Echols Preaching Prize Celebration on April 15. They preached on the theme “Food and Feasting” via Zoom and on Facebook Live.

Anliker preached on the feeding of the 5,000 from Matthew, weaving it with a story about a coronavirus cemetery in Iraq that allowed anyone to be

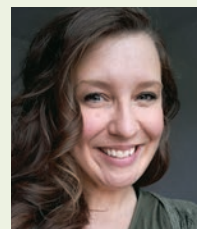
buried there, regardless of faith, for free. Preaching in both English and Spanish and using Exodus 1:22-2:10, Moraska

likened the diverse table of women who cared for and nourished baby Moses to the Triune God who cares for and nourishes us—*imago Dei*.

“Our two finalists, Krystle and



Karl Anliker



Krystle Moraska

Karl, offered rich and creative sermons on the theme of food and feasting,” said Kimberly Wagner, assistant professor of homiletics, Axel Jacob and Gerda Maria (Swanson) Carlson Chair. “They both thought creatively with their selected texts to offer messages that had theological depth, rich biblical insight,

## LSTC's 4th Annual Giving Day exceeds fundraising goal

In just 24 hours, more than 300 donors brought LSTC's April 6-7 Giving Day total to more than \$150,000, which exceeded the goals by more than \$25,000 (and gifts continue to arrive).



This year, money raised supports scholarships for students of color, expands antiracism efforts and goes to the annual fund.

Recordings of the online events, such as *Public Church Theology in the Pandemic* session featuring Marvin Wickware Jr., Vance Blackfox, Scott Fritz, Priscilla Paris-Austin and the introduction to LSTC's Antiracism Transformation Team, are available on LSTC's Facebook page under videos, and several testimonials are available on the seminary's YouTube channel. ✨

## Greg Kaufmann receives LSTC Distinguished Service Award

Greg Kaufmann (Christ Seminary-Seminex, 1977, MDiv) received the LSTC 2021 Distinguished Service Award during the spring board of directors meeting held via Zoom.

The Distinguished Service Award is conferred by the board of directors on an individual or couple for exemplary service to the mission and ministry of the seminary.

Maryjeanne Schaffmeyer, chairperson of the board's marketing and fundraising committee, said, "When Greg's nomination for the Distinguished Service Award came to our committee, I thought, 'This is so right.' The rest of the board had the same response."

Gordon Braatz, who succeeded Kaufmann as chair of the board's academic and community committee, said, "When your bishop appointed you to the board, he clearly had in mind the old adage, 'If you want



Greg Kaufmann

something done, ask someone who is already busy.' Greg has served LSTC with insight and sensitivity in countless ways...

For all that you are and all that you have done we say thank you. For the outpouring of faith and hope and love that is your life, we say, 'Thanks be to God.'

Kaufmann thanked those who helped shape his faith journey. He said, "I've been able to live out my baptismal call to serve God by serving the neighbor and God's amazing creation in so many ways and in so many places. One that I never dreamt would land in my lap was serving on the board of directors of LSTC for nine years."

He challenged everyone who attended the ceremony: "Use the gifts God has given you to make a difference in the world. Your baptism is God's call to you, yes you out there in Zoom land, to impact those around you with God's grace, forgiveness and love. I give thanks that LSTC, and the seminaries that merged to form it, have done this faithfully for 161 years."

Kaufmann continues on the review committee. While on the board, he was a member of its academic and community committee, which he chaired from 2012 to 2019. LSTC benefited from his passion for and commitment to lifelong learning and his extensive experience with theological education in his roles with the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin. ✨

and spoke to the broader LSTC community in this historical and social moment.

"It was a joy and a privilege to have the opportunity to receive such a powerful word from these students. While in pre-pandemic times the event would take place in person in LSTC's Augustana Chapel, the online format allowed folk from all over the world to join in on the event. And, there is no doubt the Holy Spirit showed up as well! It was a wonderful day and I'm grateful to all the students who submitted sermons as well as the selection committee for their fine and discerning work."

The preaching prize began in

the 2007-08 academic year, named for then-president James Kenneth Echols. It has historically been announced each year at commencement, accompanied by a \$500 award.

The prize was established and funded by LeRoy T. Carlson, a longtime supporter of the seminary, with a goal of promoting quality and excellence in preaching, inspiring students to fully use their varied gifts to improve their preaching skills, increasing the visibility and importance of preaching the Gospel on campus and beyond, and recognizing Echols' contributions. ✨

# ‘Holy chaos

## An exploration of the new first call process

By Stephani Shumaker

**F**or the first time in years, the “first call” process in the ELCA has changed. Thanks in part to changes within the church caused by the pandemic, communication about the new system has emerged in video format, not just saving trees (paper), but offering user-friendly explanations.

It was during an ELCA Conference of Bishops gathering in 2016 when bishops first approved of redesigning the first call process by naming it, “Called Forward Together in Christ.” This process took almost five years to launch, with the new first-call changes taking effect Jan. 31, 2021.

Using resources from candidacy information at [elca.org](http://elca.org), let’s unpack some of the changes.

### How are vacancies filled with first call candidates?

The method of filling vacancies within the ELCA is complex and multifaceted. There are a multitude of practical matters that bishops and regional Candidacy And Leadership Managers (CALMs) must take into consideration

when beginning the process with candidates. To begin, they must look at the gifts and situations of each candidate while looking at the needs and mission of the church, all the while inviting the Holy Spirit and God into the process.

The candidacy process for both Word and Service and Word and Sacrament ministers is normally: Entrance, Endorsement, Approval, Call to Ministry Site, Ordination.

Typically, a graduating senior entering the call process for Word and Sacrament (pastors) or Word and Service (deacons) would enter the assignment process their senior year following approval. This “old” process included receiving regional assignments at one of two yearly assignment gatherings, with synodical assignments following almost immediately. Once candidates received a synodical assignment, the candidate would be under the care and authority of their newly assigned bishop, who would approach the candidate with any potential calls and interviews.

Though they submitted a Rostered Ministers Profile (RMP), along with roster preferences that included geographical interests (synods in which they would like

to serve), candidates could expect to be assigned to any region or synod. This was often known as “the draft,” since candidates often felt they were at the mercy of the church and needs of the bishops.

### How does this new process differ?

Striking the word “assignment” from the first call practice, bishops have now created a process that “acknowledges the changing needs of candidates, congregations and the church at large,” as it says in the new first call handouts on the ELCA website. Following approval, ministry candidates entering the new first call process will now enter the process under the care of their home synod bishop until they accept a first call.

More specifically, the new call process is broken into three phases:

- Phase One:** Preapproval-conversation with candidate
- Phase Two:** Preapproval-regional consultation
- Phase Three:** Post-approval

At first glance, this new call process should foster better communication and relationships between first call candidates and their bishop prior to the placement process.

Since candidates will begin conversations preapproval, bishops and candidacy committees should have better awareness of where



# holy wonder'

their candidates are feeling called geographically, and how that call might align with their gifts for ministry.

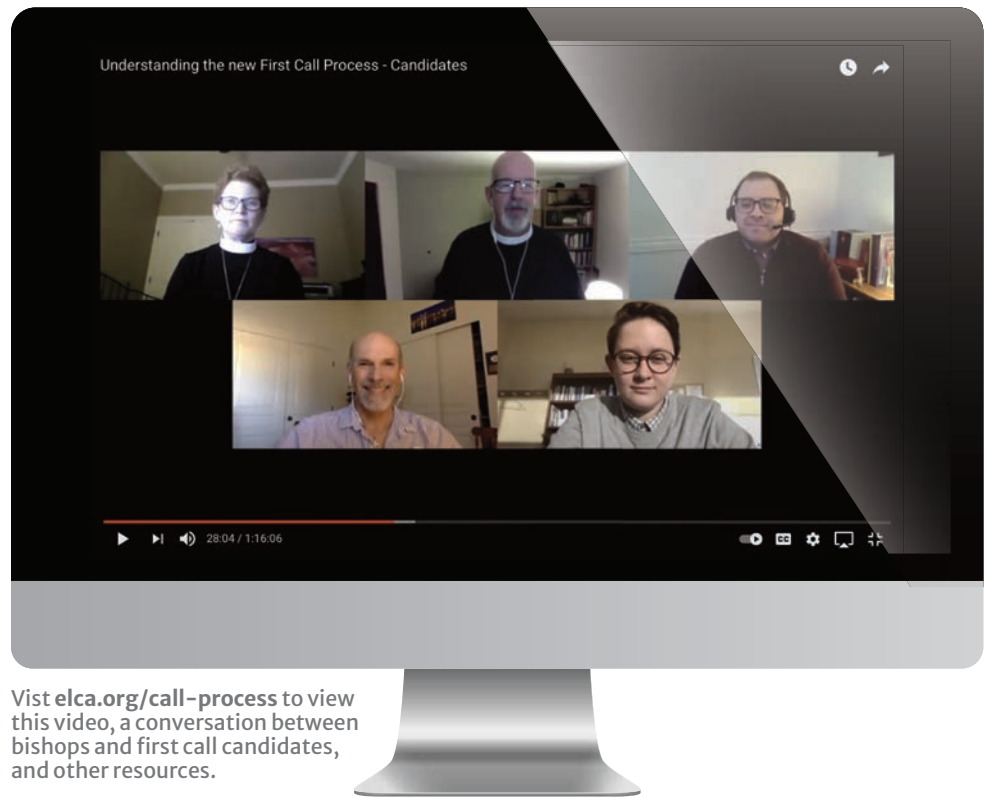
Creating a workable assignment process is the first step in the church acknowledging the changing dynamics within the denomination. The shift of how information is distributed is a testament to the bishops acknowledging the changing landscape of candidates and church. The candidacy website, previously filled with outdated handouts, is now filled with accessible and updated PDFs and videos that the bishops created.

## What do students think of the new process?

Kelsey Fauser, 2021 MDiv graduate of LSTC who is now in the care of her home Rocky Mountain Synod (2E), said, "Going through the call process currently, I would say it's a good mixture of holy chaos as well as holy wonder. I have a lot of excitement and enthusiasm for what is to come.

"However, there's also chaos with learning a new system and what it will look like moving forward as they make changes and adjustments. I'm eager to see how the process develops for future calls and future colleagues who will be going through the new system."

First-year dual degree MDiv and master of social work student Emily Moentmann is grateful she still has several years left of her



Vist [elca.org/call-process](https://elca.org/call-process) to view this video, a conversation between bishops and first call candidates, and other resources.

degree before she will have to enter into this new call process. She says she's excited to see "how the new call process will improve communication between the bishops and their candidates, and how the process will improve year after year as I advance closer to first call."

Though church leaders expect the process to be modified over time, the overall consensus among students at LSTC is one of hope. Many look forward to the new process and it adapting to the

current realities many students find themselves and their families in.

As an ELCA news release from the bishops stated, "For the sake of our shared mission, it is time to try something new, test it, and discover learning that may provide for further improvements."

As of now, the new first-call process is under review through Spring 2023. 🙌

*Shumaker, a 2021 MDiv grad who is experiencing the new call process, spent her senior year as a student worker in the communications and marketing department.*

# Commencement 2021

A year of asking, and now facing, ‘What’s next?’ *By Julie B. Sevig*

**I**n campus apartments and in homes well beyond Chicago, LSTC 2021 graduates gathered around screens to “officially” graduate on Sunday, May 16, as they watched the seminary’s 161st commencement video released on YouTube and Facebook.

This was the second year the global pandemic prevented graduates from taking their traditional walk to St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church to receive their diplomas and hoods in person. Nevertheless, they persisted.

## CLASS OF 2021



Nash Earnest  
Shaffer III, MA



Togu Paskaraya  
Apriono Sihite, MA



R. Kim Maschoff,  
MAM



Karl William  
Anliker, MDiv



Daniel James  
Beirne, MDiv



Lily Christine  
Brellenthin, MDiv



For the second year in a row, the pandemic made it necessary for graduates to watch a recorded video of commencement, some of them posting their celebrations to social media, as seen on these pages.



Today was a great day!  
Congratulations to the class  
of 2021! We did it!  
**Katrina Endres-Steingraeber**  
(MDiv graduate)







Yesterday I received my ThM degree (Masters in Theology), marking the halfway point to completing my PhD. I am still at the same school plugging away (LSTC can't get rid of me that easily) so it was a low-key virtual graduation for me. Don't worry—NO ONE is going to be able to miss the party I'll throw when I finally finish!!

**Denise Rector** (*ThM graduate*)

President James Nieman in his opening remarks named some of the constraints graduates have been under, saying a pandemic wasn't all they'd faced.

"Almost daily this past year, waves of new challenges washed ashore, one after another: social division and political hostility, racial violence and the structures that fuel it, climate change and financial hardship, let alone the personal sorrows you lamented privately.

"There were surely mornings, maybe many, when your first question was, 'Well, what's next?'"

He recalled what graduates of predecessor seminaries more than a century ago faced as they also regarded their prospects: influenza, world war, Jim Crow, and fiscal panic.

"I do know that their witness, even so, is one reason we are here right now. The same can be said now of you. You faced a year asking 'What's next?'"

– but still you persisted. Your 'What's next?' became not a feeble whimper but instead a durable cry of resistance – 'So, what's next?' We're still here. Bring it on.

"I want your persistent, resistant 'What's next?' to ring in our ears and remind us of you. For you, daily challenges became your proving ground, testing your resilience. After all, following a year like this, what could still surprise you? All those days of 'What's next?' made you ready. Atop that, you saw how greater changes still lay ahead for our church and so rose to meet them. More than most, you learned we must leave behind tired habits and now forge new forms of ministry better suited for the days ahead. Your 'What's next?' will change us, and shows you hopeful."

**The ceremony**

The video began with a rapid virtual walk to St. Thomas that

featured photos provided by the community. It included greetings from ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and Metropolitan Chicago Synod Bishop Yehiel Curry, and continued with conferring of degrees: master of arts (two), master of arts in ministry (one), master of divinity (32), master of theology (six), doctor of ministry in preaching (two) and doctor of philosophy (two). As their names were announced, a video (or photo) of the graduate moving their tassel to the left appeared. PhD students provided humor by holding signs that said PhD graduates don't move tassels.

José David Rodríguez, Augustana Heritage Chair of Global Mission and World Christianity and acting dean of academic affairs who has been on the faculty since 1985, gave the commencement address and was recognized for his service upon his retirement. LSTC also

**CLASS OF 2021**



Leah Brooke Chibe, MDiv



Dafne del Risco-Nolla, MDiv



Kelsey Fauser, MDiv



Reed Noel Fowler, MDiv



Marcus M. Guerra Jr., MDiv



František Janák, MDiv



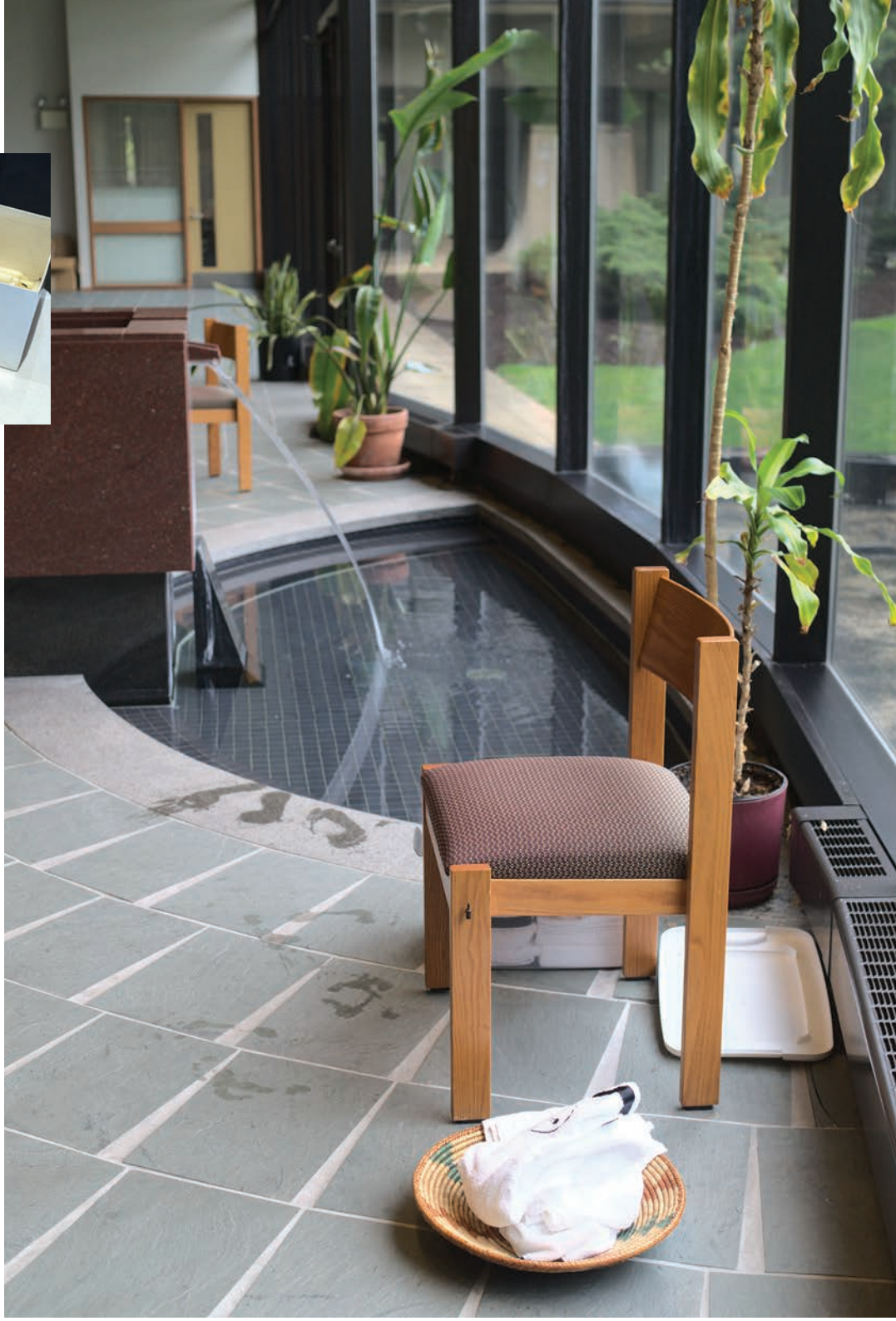
Christina L. Jindra, MDiv





For the first time, LSTC had a “Graduates’ Day” prior to Commencement, which included a chance for graduates to make their traditional walk through the font, light candles in the chapel and walk the seminary’s labyrinth.

So excited to graduate tomorrow! Will be taking a break from the beach and cocktails for Christina’s Commencement Watch Party!  
**Christina Montgomery**  
 (MDiv graduate), writing from the beach



Christina M. Johnson, MDiv



Kyle Eugene Johnson, MDiv



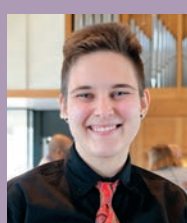
Amber Jane Kalina, MDiv



Elizabeth A. Koerner, MDiv



Kelsey Elaine Kresse, MDiv



Carolyn Seiter Lawrence, MDiv



Robin Lovett Owen, MDiv





José David Rodríguez gave his commencement address from Augustana Chapel.

honored retiring Javier “Jay” Alanís, executive director of the Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest (LSPS) in Austin, Texas. LSPS is a joint program of LSTC and Wartburg Theological Seminary.

A Zoom choir made up of students, staff and alumni provided music. The commencement video ended with the presentation of the class gift—\$2,021 toward scholarships for students of color and LGBTQIA+ students—and greetings of congratulations from a variety of staff and faculty. Those who wished joined a festive Zoom reception in which they were able to mingle, share memories, and offer congratulations and toasts. Not the same as taking photos in person, or eating wonderful food at a reception, but some called it the best part of the day.

#### The speaker

In his commencement address, Rodríguez examined the future of theological education—both its challenges and promise.

“We are moving away from a theological education paradigm where the dominant expression of identity and culture had to fit everyone. We are now recognizing the diversity of creation, but still trying to fit it all under the same traditional paradigm,” he said. “We need a new paradigm that not only recognizes our diversity of expression but allows it to flourish as God intended.”

He proceeded to outline fresh ways of looking at theological education through the lens of the Latinx community. Rodríguez

## CLASS OF 2021



Michael J. Markwell, MDiv



Christina Marthield Montgomery, MDiv



Leif Nelson, MDiv



Phillip David Potaczek, MDiv



Ashley Nichole Rosa-Ruggieri, MDiv



Dalton Bennett Rosa-Ruggieri, MDiv



Kristen Mary Schmid, MDiv



Kimberly Wagner gives her baccalaureate sermon.

began and ended his address with the parable of the sower. As he reminded graduates of their “rights and privileges” of their seminary degree, he also challenged them to claim and use their privileges, the blessedness, of their Christian faith.

“How will the practice in your new working environments represent that which you have seen and what you have heard during your programs of studies... remember that, when your experience in ministry gets rough, and your efforts seem worthless, your call to witness in words and deeds will be complemented by the power of God, the Sower, who is guiding and empowering our witness, over all terrains.”

**Baccalaureate**

On Saturday afternoon, graduates, families and friends, and the LSTC community participated in a virtual baccalaureate service (on YouTube and Facebook) at which Kimberly Wagner, assistant professor of homiletics and Alex Jacob and Gerda Maria (Swanson) Carlson Chair in Homiletics, preached.

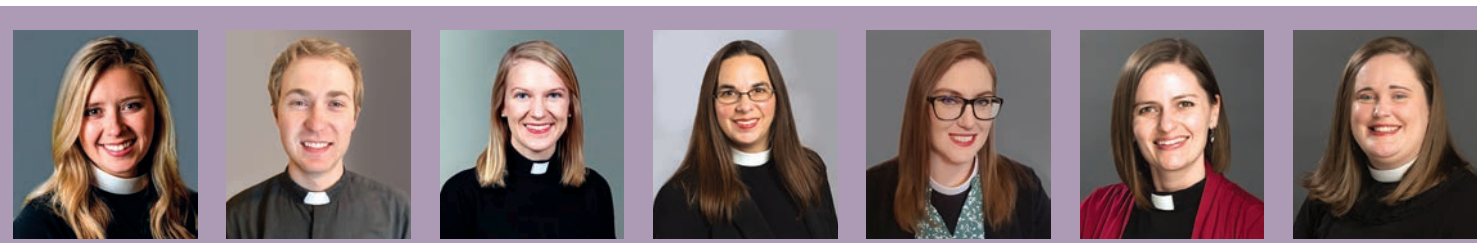
She also noted that the year had been stranger and harder than most academic years. But, “here we are.. We celebrate those of you who have run the race, written the papers, discussed the ideas, studied the texts, grappled with articulating through word and action God’s presence and work in the world.”

Wagner urged graduates to follow the model and wisdom of the

day’s texts, Psalm 1, Acts 1:1-11 and John 17:6-26, which she said “offer us language of blessing and prayer.”

In the midst of liminal, uncertain, and unsteady realities, Jesus prays—not for success, right action or even adequate knowledge, Wagner said, but that along with the first disciples we “may be swept up and formed, oriented, protected, and sustained by the relational love of God... In these last moments, Jesus doesn’t test or teach the disciples but enwraps them in prayer that they may be continuously formed through, grounded in, and steadied by the relational care and love of God.

“We, your faculty, staff, colleagues, and mentors at LSTC, know we must send you into a



Stephani Joann Shumaker, MDiv      Aaron Silco, MDiv      Anna Silco, MDiv      Katrina Louise Steingraeber, MDiv      Sarah Swindall, MDiv      Bethany Ruth Ulrich, MDiv      Kirsten Elizabeth Wee, MDiv



We send you into a church that has been and will be forced to reimagine its role and work in the world. We send you into spaces of service and learning and teaching, as systems and educational institutions are shifting and the questions seem to be larger and more numerous than the answers... We trust that you are ready.

**Kimberly Wagner**, *assistant professor of homiletics and Alex Jacob and Gerda Maria (Swanson) Carlson Chair in Homiletics*



world that we cannot control and for which we cannot fully prepare you. We send you into a church that has been and will be forced to reimagine its role and work in the world. We send you into spaces of service and learning and teaching, as systems and educational institutions are shifting and the questions seem to be larger and

more numerous than the answers.

“But... We trust that you are ready, not because you know all the right answers (as gifted and talented as you are), but because, we pray, you have been and will continue to be rooted and formed in the love of God and intertwined with communities of support and care.” 🌸

I am now an official graduate of LSTC again... A young man came to me after church and said, “Watching you, I think I want to go back to school.” That warms my heart. It is never too late to learn and to be the person you want to be.

**Nash E. Shaffer III** (*MA 2021; MDiv 2019; Bachelor of Arts (Pastoral Ministries) 1997*)

## CLASS OF 2021



Anne Marie Kincaid Wickland, MDiv



Ramona P. Acevedo, ThM



Mark Steven LaChonce, ThM



Mathew Dax Sunny, ThM



M. Seng Tsin Nan, ThM



River Cook Needham, ThM



Denise L. Rector, ThM



Victoria Björck Karlsson, DMin in Preaching



Magdalena Öhrling, DMin in Preaching



Wendy Christine Heilmann, PhD



Mayuko Yasuda, PhD



# Seminary ambassador

How Lane Lewis jumped from limited seminary knowledge to telling LSTC's story

By Elizabeth Chentland

**W**hen Lane Lewis was encouraged to consider volunteering with LSTC in 2019, he realized he hadn't ever given much thought to where pastors come from and how they are trained.

A member of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Naperville, Ill., he was nudged toward LSTC by Randy Schneider, former LSTC Foundation board member, as well as two of his pastors, John Gerike and Brian Wise (an LSTC alum).

Lewis wasn't previously affiliated with LSTC, but he was confident in his ability to help the LSTC foundation board of trustees in achieving their objectives. After all, he was a successful businessman with experience building relationships, generating revenue and managing complex programs.

First, it was important to Lewis to further inspect the role of seminaries and to listen to more stories about how seminaries are shaping future leaders of the church. So, he jumped in.

He quickly learned that seminaries have gone through and continue to go through some of the same struggles his home

congregation faced, such as fewer people engaged and reduced budgets. He heard more stories from members of his congregation about the value of seminary education. Soon, he realized that if he wanted to have a greater impact on the larger church, he could contribute to both his congregation and LSTC.

Lewis first provided voluntary support and leadership as a member of the LSTC foundation board of trustees, focusing on fundraising. Then, he joined a property task force to address critical questions foundational to securing a long term financially sustainable position for LSTC.

Most recently (in 2021), Lewis was presented with the opportunity to chair a new LSTC task force that would focus on growing relationships with the wider church as well as educating congregations about the value of a seminary education through effective storytelling. He gladly, and enthusiastically, accepted.

Since, Lewis has worked with fellow task force members in drafting a model for effective engagement with the wider church. He also has listened and participated in story-telling opportunities, which have taught



him how those affiliated with LSTC have made significant contributions around the world.

He sees his commitment to the seminary as an opportunity to grow in his faith and relationship with God while making an impact on the future of the church.

"What excites me most is that I see an opportunity to recast the role of LSTC from merely producing ordained pastors to being the hub of a faith-based learning community impacting the larger church for the sake of the world," Lewis said. "I have realized that LSTC has a profound impact on my faith, on the pastors that have informed my faith, and on the greater church." ❁

*Chentland is director of strategic marketing and communications.*

## Editor's note

If you're interested in learning more about the efforts and needs of the task force, or have an LSTC story with impact that Lane Lewis and other committee members could showcase to communicate the value of LSTC's educational experience, please contact Mark Lowry, philanthropic engagement associate, at [mark.lowry@lstc.edu](mailto:mark.lowry@lstc.edu).



José David Rodríguez



Javier "Jay" Alanís

# Speaking truth to the church

Three global theologians reflect on LSTC, TEEM and joy in the midst of struggle

*By Jan Boden*



Eliseo Pérez-Álvarez

June 30, two esteemed global theologians, José David Rodríguez and Javier “Jay” Alanís, retired from full-time duties at LSTC and the Lutheran Seminary Program of the Southwest (LSPS). Rodríguez began teaching at LSTC in 1981 and joined the faculty full-time in 1990. Alanís served at LSPS since 2000 and as its executive director since 2009.

In January, LSTC welcomed Eliseo Pérez-Álvarez as associate professor of Lutheran systematic theology and global Lutheranism. Like Rodríguez and Alanís, he earned his doctorate at LSTC.

The three have known one another for decades. Rodríguez was a professor and advisor to Alanís when he was a student at LSTC. Alanís and Pérez-Álvarez helped to shape the program at LSPS and became teaching theologians there.

Their wide-ranging areas of expertise intersect at global, Latinx and Lutheran theologies.

They recently met via Zoom to reflect on theological education, LSTC, the cost of their call and where they find joy.

### How did you decide to come to LSTC?

**Rodríguez:** I first came to LSTC in 1959. My father was a student at the School of Missions at Chicago Lutheran

Theological Seminary in Maywood, Ill., a predecessor school of LSTC.

I returned to LSTC in 1971 to study for my master of divinity degree because of LSTC’s long history of working with Puerto Ricans. At that time, LSTC had the best program of advanced studies—ThM and ThD that later turned to a PhD—in the Lutheran Church in America (LCA). In 1988, when the LCA joined the American Lutheran Church (ALC) and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC) to form the ELCA, LSTC developed one of the best Hispanic Ministry programs of study with the greatest number of Latinx students for the MDiv as well as Latinx candidates for the PhD.

In the 1960s, LSTC established a relationship with the seminary in Argentina, where my father was

a professor. When I went there in 2011–2013 to serve as rector (president) of the University Institute (ISEDET), people there remembered that relationship.

**Alanís:** I was invited by the LSPS faculty to do a PhD and return to LSPS to teach. I never dreamed that a PhD would be part of my faith journey. LSPS and local churches helped fund my studies.

LSTC was the right seminary for my PhD studies. Richard Perry Jr. was my first advisor, followed by José David Rodríguez, who advised and guided me during the PhD dissertation stage. Their global perspectives on theology formed me into a global theologian more than a Latinx theologian.

My dissertation specifically addresses the borderlands, a unique and particular region of the U.S. with global implications. I’ve spoken about the borderlands at places as varied as ISEDET in Argentina and the Walls Conference in Germany.

The experience of studying with a global community at LSTC allowed me to hear their voices and to see myself beyond a person from Texas. All of it was set in motion by faculty who were sensitive to the calling of the Spirit to serve the global church.

**Pérez-Álvarez:** I went to seminary at 22 with a call to be a rural pastor, but then my Old Testament professor encouraged me to pursue graduate studies. I had to wait 10 years to get a scholarship.

While I was the director of the Presbyterian Publishing House of Mexico, David White, the first history teacher of Justo González, offered me his help to continue my studies. I didn’t think I could afford to go to graduate school. He wrote to Justo González about me, which resulted in a scholarship to Atlanta [Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Ga.]. In a class with Walter Brueggemann, I was so fortunate in teaming with Judy Bailey, who was our neighbor as well. She



This is a time to revisit the nature of the TEEM program, namely an alternative route to ministry of Word and Sacrament for marginal people who are already serving neglected congregations. It won't hurt to remember that the TEEM program is neither a shortcut to ordination to Word and Sacrament nor a springboard to be 'upgraded' through more studies into the 'canonical' MDiv.

Eliseo Pérez-Álvarez, associate professor of Lutheran systematic theology and global Lutheranism

and her husband Jim, a Wartburg professor, were taking a sabbatical.

Justo also introduced me to José David, who brought me and my supportive wife, Gina, to Chicago.

At LSTC, I also appreciated the ACTS Consortium. Both really expanded my horizons. My wife and I studied one year in Denmark since grace happens.

### How do you see theological education evolving?

**Pérez-Álvarez:** I'm overjoyed by the re-launch of the Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta, Ga., for new African Descent leaders. Now, regarding Latinx theological education, this is a Kairos moment for LSTC to reclaim Latinx theological education, given the fact that 10 years ago practically all the ELCA Latinx programs were dismantled. Instead of evolving, we have experienced regressing; instead of going forward we go backwards. The U.S. is the second largest Spanish speaking country in the world and Spanish is the first spoken language of world Christianity.

This is a time to revisit the nature of the TEEM (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries) program, namely an alternative route to ministry of Word and Sacrament for marginal people who are already serving neglected

congregations. It won't hurt to remember that the TEEM program is neither a shortcut to ordination to Word and Sacrament nor a springboard to be "upgraded" through more studies into the "canonical" MDiv.

**Rodríguez:** It has been a challenge that the Latinx community in the U.S. has had very few resources for theological education.

Eliseo and Jay designed the courses for students in the TEEM programs at LSPS for candidacy for ordination to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament in the ELCA that broke new ground. Future efforts in developing programs for Latinx candidacy will need to be based on their work.

**Alanís:** TEEM is not a shortcut. The TEEM program never values quantity over quality. The gift that TEEM students bring is life experience and practices of ministry while studying.

At LSPS we had over 40 TEEM grads, with more than half of them people of color.

**Rodríguez:** One of the most important things about Jay's and Eliseo's work at LSPS is their design of courses for TEEM and credit has to be given to them. That's an important contribution. Other ELCA seminaries borrowed this design for their TEEM programs of study.

**Alanís:** In the Lutheran church we

live with the tension, "How much is good enough?" Lutheran theology is meant to be contextualized. Students of color should not have the burden to prove they are Lutheran enough culturally. This misses the point of the priesthood of all believers and how we're formed differently.

**Pérez-Álvarez:** The term "multiculturalism" was coined by a white anthropologist in order to draw the line with non-whites; that's why we go by the co-equal interculturalism. And furthermore, we stay away from the hegemonic boundaries training and psychological exams [candidates are required to take]. We promote intersectionality, intersubjectivity and epistemologies from the global south as well.

**Rodríguez:** Daniel Aleshire, former long-time director of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), recently published the book *Beyond Profession: The Next Future of Theological Education*. He says that after WWII, theological education became a profession—preparing people to be "professional theologians" in congregations. He argues that we need to go from profession to formation. He traces this back to an earlier model of theological education that focused on formation of character: being a person of character, grounded in foundational leadership skills that would serve leaders in the church and in the public arena.

TEEM started with this sort of grounding in character even without the professional academic background. But even faculty members at LSTC questioned the TEEM alternative for ordination in the ELCA because, at that time, we were so focused on the need for the academic master's degree for ELCA ordination.

I will be honest with you. The best work that we three have been engaged in has not been a happy one. We have experienced resistance.

The biggest frustration I have as I move toward retirement is that LSTC discontinued its Hispanic Ministry Program. It seems that working with the Latinx Community has not been a priority for the ELCA or LSTC. Programs of this nature seem to develop only by the efforts of those who are going against the current.

I need to share this frustration. I'm not trying to make other people feel guilty, but to allow for some space for my Latinx community. The Latinx community is not perceived as an opportunity to enrich the church as a whole.

**Alanís:** In conversations, writing, teaching and proclamation, we are speaking the truth to the church. We don't have the luxury of skirting issues. We don't mind naming things for what they are.

We are coming from experiences of being at the margins and we're willing to take the hit or the backlash. It is part of our call to serve a world and a church that is broken. We are called to speak truth and we are called

to heal. It is part of our giftedness. We speak out of our wounds.

## Are there joys that have helped you keep going?

**Rodríguez:** The work I have been doing is for the benefit of my Latinx community as well as other communities that constitute the ELCA and other Christian and non-Christian denominations. I find joy in people who take the opportunities offered them as a gift. I see that people with no academic background go far beyond the opportunities offered to them.

The work of a systematic theologian is to bring things together that are fragmented. That is not easy in a society that is individualized and fragmented.

I find joy in moving into marginalized communities, other ethnic groups, finding relationships with marginalized communities. I enjoy relating to the number of people from African American, Native American and Asian communities who have begun to learn and use the Spanish language to open a door to a different culture.

Our Latinx community has come together to create ecumenical organizations like the Hispanic Theological Initiative Consortium (HTIC), the Hispanic Summer Program (HSP) and the Association of Hispanic Theological Education (AETH). These are some of the most successful initiatives in theological education

in the USA. They emerged out of a need identified by Latinx people and their contributions have proven to be valuable for the formation of Latinx leaders for ministry.

**Alanís:** Ditto to everything José said. It's a joy when a student has come to me and said, "You have helped me find my voice." That's what gives me the drive to teach. What gives me joy in teaching? Helping students find that place within themselves.

It's a joy to teach, to worship with students, which allows me to see the Spirit at work in their lives and in my life. In this and in my ecumenical work I see how my work touches the whole church. I am a global theologian. I do not want to be pigeonholed as a scholar with a constrained epistemology and limited theological lens to interpret God's activity in the world.

**Pérez-Álvarez:** I'm overjoyed for being able to live at the borderlands. I thank God for allowing me to accompany worshiping, serving, teaching, unlearning, having table talks, dancing and laughing together with my people. For the blessing of being able to live in five countries of the Greater Caribbean and in Denmark, I'm speechless.

Every morning I awaken with a sacred sip of coffee gives me joy. I'm usually optimistic at the sunrise, pessimistic at the sundown, and realistic while dreaming. ☘

*Boden is public relations manager.*

# In the Lutheran church we live with the tension, 'How much is good enough?' Lutheran theology is meant to be contextualized. Students of color should not have the burden to prove they are Lutheran enough culturally. This misses the point of the priesthood of all believers and how we're formed differently.

*Javier "Jay" Alanís, former director of the Lutheran Seminary Program of the Southwest*



By Katrina L. Steingraeber

The first time I faced my white culture through the theological lens and what my culture means to and does to people of color was in the Theological Reflections of Intersectionality class taught by Dr. Linda Thomas. I read the book *Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* by Debby Irving, which a classmate and I presented to the class. I felt as if the book was written for me or about me. This book clearly laid out characteristics of white culture: conflict avoidance, defensiveness, either/or thinking, valuing formal education over life experience and being status-oriented, to name a few. This book put unwritten white privilege right in my face. All of which I benefited from (and still benefit from) without being consciously aware of it.



It was in this class that I first heard about a new team soon to begin at LSTC, the Antiracism

LSTC's Antiracism Transformation Team (ATT), formed last summer, has completed its monthly trainings with Chicago ROAR (Regional Organizing for Antiracism). It is in the process of organizing internally, developing strategies to engage with different parts of the LSTC community, and developing relationships with external partners.

The team is now looking toward a formal commissioning or launch when the fall semester begins. Two ATT members reflect on the commitment and discomfort of this transformational work.

# reflections

from LSTC Antiracism Transformation Team members

Transformation Team (ATT). After joining the ATT, I again faced my white culture in a white caucus breakout group which took place several months into the training. Our CROAR trainer explained “Caucusing seeks the cultivation of behavioral change.” People of color and white people meet separately to examine ways Internalized Racial Oppression (IRO) and Internalized Racial Superiority (IRS) are showing up on the team.

In this breakout meeting we listed several of the same things the book named and then some. It is an uncomfortable process to name all the stuff we carry and inherit with our culture. I had not experienced caucusing before this training. I am thankful to the CROAR leaders who walked us through this process. Caucusing can be used whenever needed to hold ourselves and others accountable. Even though this is a hard and uncomfortable process, it is helpful to name and work on our own IRS, and ultimately change a behavior.

Going through the ATT training was not easy. It took hard work and commitment to the work of antiracism. During the trainings I felt many emotions. I got angry but remained quiet about my anger; I cried but hid my tears, which I recognize is what is expected of my culture. I am working on allowing myself to show my emotions, name them, and embrace them. Being a part of the Antiracism Transformation Team has been challenging and a blessing to me. The team provides a space for me to be brave (still working on this), a space to hear others’ perspectives and stories, and a space to work on making institutional changes. We have work to do, my friends. ✿

By Vickie Johnson

I had mixed emotions when asked to serve on the LSTC Antiracism Transformation Team. Knowing that there is continuous work to be done to tear down the walls of racism and its lasting effects, I wondered why me?



Langston Hughes describes how he was feeling in *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*: “I’ve known rivers, ancient, dusky rivers. My soul has grown deep like the rivers.” I have lived through the ills of racism growing up in the rivers of Chicago’s Hyde Park community from my youth—attending local schools, Murray, Bret Harte, and Kenwood High School, and taking band at Ray. I know the rivers of this community, living just two blocks from LSTC, playing in Nichols Park until dark. I am aware of the good that the people of this neighborhood have done in the fight against systemic racism as well as the actions of white privilege that continue to oppress. Is it because I know these

rivers and how my soul has grown deep like the rivers that I am asked to serve?

After being made aware of the amount of time the team would need to invest, I came in kicking and screaming! Who has time to attend multiple three-day/all-day trainings that included a Sunday and Holy Week? Who has time to do multiple one-on-one’s while pastoring during a pandemic? It is so inconsiderate and inconvenient. But the “rivers” that I know that have carried racism on its waves are both inconsiderate and inconvenient. This realization caused my eyes and heart to be opened to the work that must be done on this team. It is a call, one that requires much of one who has been given much. We are called to ride on the rocky rivers of racism, asking and answering the hard questions, tackling the difficult task, and celebrating every pebble of success that causes a ripple effect for more of the same. Not only is this team called, we are all called to the river of work that must be done drop by drop to eradicate racism here and wherever we find ourselves. ✿

We are called to ride on the rocky rivers of racism, asking and answering the hard questions, tackling the difficult task, and celebrating every pebble of success.

Vickie Johnson,  
LSTC Antiracism  
Transformation Team  
member



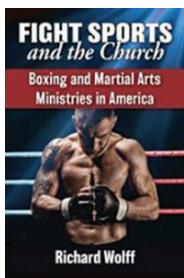
## 1984

**Paul Egensteiner** (MDiv) was quoted in the March 12 *Tampa Bay Times* article, “Faith leaders’ year of pandemic: grief, solace, resilience.” He was also quoted in the May 6 *National Herald* article, “National Day of Prayer inspires pleas for unity and justice.” He serves as bishop of the Metropolitan New York Synod.

## 1989

**Paul Erickson** (MDiv) was part of the May 13 news story “Churches face post-pandemic challenges, uncertain future,” which aired on WISN-ABC12 in Milwaukee.

**Richard Wolff** (MA) recently published *Fight Sports and the Church: Boxing and Martial Arts Ministries in America* (2021, McFarland). The book takes on every aspect of the topic, from urban-ministry-sponsored boxing programs for at-risk youth to biblical references to fight sports to the ethics and compatibility of these sports with church teachings. It is available in paperback and e-book formats. Wolff is associate professor of



communications at Valparaiso [Ind.] University, and advisor to its boxing club.

## 1993

**Charles Fredrickson** (1993, MDiv) is one of the authors of *Faith-Based Organizing: A Congregational Planning Resource for Addressing Poverty* (2021, Fortress Press). It was written for pastors and lay leaders who want to get their entire congregations involved in faith-based community organizing to address poverty and its root causes.

## 1997

**Caryn Riswold** (ThM; 2000, PhD) has been granted tenure by Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa. She is professor of religion and the Mike and Marge McCoy Family Distinguished Chair in Lutheran Heritage and Mission at Wartburg.

## 1998

**Barry Scott** (MDiv) retired from full-time ministry May 1. He served as associate pastor at Hosanna! St Charles, Ill., 1998–2006. Since 2006 he was the senior pastor at Trinity Church and School in Marysville, Ohio, with the only ELCA elementary school in the Southern Ohio Synod. He wrote, “It’s astounding to me how on an almost daily basis I recall something I learned at LSTC and put it to use in my ministry and personal life. The profound experience of grace I encountered there from staff, faculty and fellow students is something I have ever since hoped to model and teach among those I have been called to serve. What a gift!”

## 2003

**William Flippin Jr.** (MDiv; 2005, ThM) published “Wake up, church!” in the April *Living Lutheran*.

**Francisco Javier Goitia Padilla** (ThM; 2014, PhD) published “Theological education en Español” in the January/February *Living Lutheran*.

## 2006

**Meghan Johnston Alebouni** (MDiv) completed her PhD in the Study of Religion at University of Denver/Iliff School of Theology. Her dissertation title is “Out of Time: Temporal Performativity and Resistance in Popular American Film, Television and Theater.”



Angela Khabeb speaks at the vigil for Daunte Wright.

## 2008

**Jordan Miller Stubbendick** (MDiv) published “What will God bring to life?” in the April 27 *Living Lutheran* online.

## 2009

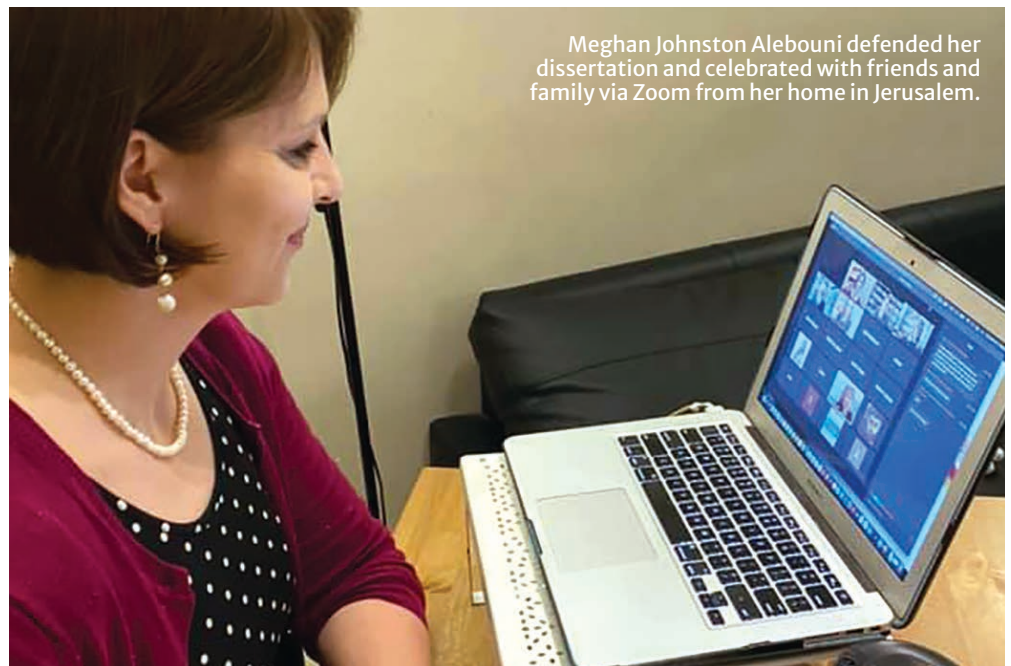
**Tim Brown** (MDiv) published “A cross-shaped lens: Martin Luther’s Easter Book centers the cross,” in the April *Living Lutheran*.

**Yehiel Curry** (TEEM; 2013, MDiv) published “Sacred Vulnerability: A bishop on storytelling,” part of “The power of storytelling” in the April *Living Lutheran*.

**Angela Khabeb** (MDiv) spoke at the April 12 vigil for Daunte Wright held in Brooklyn Center, Minn. She was quoted in an April 14 *National Catholic Reporter* story about the vigil. She published “Grounded in Grace” reflections in the January/February, March, April and May issues of *Living Lutheran*.

## 2010

**Niveen Ibrahim Sarras** (ThM; 2013, PhD) published the perspective “Jesus was Palestinian Jew – not White” in the April issue of *Living Lutheran*. She serves as pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Wausau, Wis.



Meghan Johnston Alebouni defended her dissertation and celebrated with friends and family via Zoom from her home in Jerusalem.





PHOTO BY LAWRENCE TANNER RICHARDSON

## 2014

**Ben Adams** (MDiv) accepted a call to be the pastor of a new campus ministry being formed in Dearborn and Detroit, Mich., on the campuses of Henry Ford College, the University of Michigan–Dearborn and Wayne State University. Since 2015 he has served as assistant pastor and mission developer at Holy Trinity in the Loop, Chicago, and South Loop Campus Ministries.

## 2016

**Baiju Markose** (ThM; 2019, PhD) published *Notes from the Edges: Theological Intonations* (2021, Christian World Imprints, New Delhi, India). Thirty-one theological essays written in the context of the pandemic attempt to unplug the social edges through the lens of scripture and radical faith.

## 2017

**Louis Tillman IV** (MDiv) and his congregation, St. Philip Evangelical Lutheran Church in East Baltimore, Md., were featured in the January/February *Living Lutheran* story, “It’s in our spirit: ELCA’s oldest Africa Descent congregation serves community in unprecedented ways.” He published “This is my story: seeking an equal seat at the table of privilege” in the March 19 *Baptist News Globe*. In addition to serving St. Philip he serves as chaplain, captain select, in the U.S. Air Force Reserves.

Mathew Berger,  
Amy Asendorf Berger  
and baby Simon

## 2019

**Amy Asendorf Berger** (MDiv) and **Mathew Berger** (MDiv) welcomed their son, Simon Kane Berger on March 16. He weighed 9 pounds and was 20 inches long. Amy is pastor of St. Petri Lutheran Church, Flanagan, Ill., and Mathew is pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Pontiac, Ill.

**Helen Chukka** (ThM) contributed the Lutheran World Federation blog post “Facing the ‘ugly truth’ of inter-caste marriages through theological studies” on March 8, International Women’s Day.

## 2020

**Danielle (Elle) Dowd** (MDiv) was elected to the Planned Parenthood Clergy Advisory Board in April. The board leads national and local efforts to communicate with religious leaders and communities of faith advocating for access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health care. Her book, *Baptized in Tear Gas: From White Moderate to Abolitionist* will be released in August by Broadleaf Books.



**Julie Grafe** was ordained May 30 at Lutheran Church of the Ascension in Northfield, Ill., and now serves as pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Aurora, Ill.

**Lora Kay Salley** was ordained June 13 at St. Luke’s Lutheran Church of Logan Square in Chicago, and as a deacon has been called by the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Council to serve as a chaplain at Advocate Aurora Health.

## 2021

**Elizabeth Koerner** (MDiv) was ordained April 23 at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Bristol, Conn., and livestreamed on Facebook. She is serving as pastor of St. John’s Lutheran Church, Stroudsburg, Pa.

**Michael Markwell** was ordained June 5 at St. John Lutheran Church in Joliet, Ill. He has been called as pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Escanaba, Mich.

**Denise Rector** (ThM) delivered a TED-style talk on the future of theological education during the annual Nelson W. Trout Lectures held online in April by Trinity Theological Seminary at Capital University. This year’s theme was “Do you want to be well? ‘Cause wholeness ain’t a trifling thing.” It also featured discernment conversation for persons of African descent.



**David Munro Barnet**

**1941–2021** | *Class of 1968*  
David Barnet, 80, died Feb. 17 in Seaside, Ore. He was a parish pastor in Wisconsin and served as a retirement home chaplain/administrator with the Good Samaritan Society from 1970–1977. Barnet returned to parish ministry to serve Zion Lutheran Church in Redmond, Ore., then Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Seaside. After his 2004 retirement, he served as interim pastor in Chinook, Wash. He is survived by his wife Linda, two children, four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

**Jack Roger Behlendorf**

**1934–2021** | *Class of 1959, Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary*  
Jack Behlendorf, 87, of Williamsburg, Va., died April 19. Behlendorf served congregations in Iowa before becoming a U.S. Army chaplain. In addition to pastoral and administrative duties at various stateside Army posts, he served in Vietnam, Germany and South Korea. He was awarded the Bronze Star during his service in Vietnam, as well as the Meritorious Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal, and the Army Achievement Medal. After he retired from the Army, he was a pastor in New Jersey, and in retirement was an interim pastor and volunteer in Williamsburg. He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Joyce, two children, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

**Richard William Gahl**

**1939–2021** | *Concordia Theological Seminary Class of 1965*  
Richard Gahl, 81, of Westlake, Ohio, died May 14 after complications from cancer. He was ordained in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) and served congregations in Indiana and Pennsylvania, and served 25 years as executive director of the LCMS Ohio District. When he retired he served Lutheran Metropolitan Ministries in Cleveland, Ohio. He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Judith A. Gahl.

**Brian Kenneth Gegel**

**1957–2021** | *Class of 2012*  
Brian Gegel, 63, died April 10 at the Randolph County Care Center in Sparta, Ill. He worked as a chemist at Dow AgroSciences for 29 years before retiring early to earn his MDiv, and served Vista and LeSueur Lutheran Churches in New Richland, Minn. In 2019, he returned to his hometown area and had recently began a call to St. Luke Lutheran Church in Campbell Hill, Ill. He was preceded in death by his wife of 37 years, Jane (Wehrheim) Gegel, and is survived by two children.

**Ivan Dale Gunderman**

**1940–2021** | *Concordia (St. Louis) Class of 1966*  
Ivan Gunderman, 81, died March 29. He served parishes in Chicago, Denver, Albuquerque, Tucson, Las Vegas, Phoenix, Alamogordo, N.M., and New York, N.Y., and was the founding pastor of King of Kings Lutheran in Arvada, Colo. He also started and was editor of the *Rocky Mountain Lutheran* newspaper. He is survived by Sally, his wife of 36 years (1966–2002), two children and four grandchildren.

**Lula Marie Fulmer Hatcher**

**1939–2021** | *Class of 1994*  
Marie Fulmer Hatcher, 82, died Jan. 8 in Madison, Tenn. After her children completed their higher education, Hatcher enrolled at LSTC at age 55. She served churches in transition and was CEO of Lutheran Services of Tennessee (2005–2007). She is survived by three children and five grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband and son.

**David LeRoy Hurty**

**1930–2021** | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1956*  
David Hurty, 90, died May 8 in Oakland, Calif. He served parishes in Arizona and California prior to becoming house chaplain and director of operations at Seafarers International House until his retirement in 1996. Seafarers, in New York City, is a ministry of the ELCA. Hurty served on the advisory council for People with Disabilities at Lincoln Center, where he developed large print and braille program notes for the New York Philharmonic Orchestra and other Lincoln Center programs. He is survived by his wife of almost 66 years, Kathleen, four children, seven grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

**Robert F. Lorenz**

**1925–2021** | *Central Lutheran Seminary class of 1952*  
Robert F. Lorenz, 95, died March 11 in Loveland, Colo. In addition to his MDiv from Central, a predecessor school, he completed chaplaincy training in 1978. Lorenz served congregations in Iowa and was chaplain at the Jane Lamb Hospital, the Iowa Braille School and the Virginia Gay Hospital. After retiring he was a charter board member of the Loveland Habitat for Humanity. He is survived by two daughters, nine grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife of 60 years, Bobbie, and two children.

**George Adolph Lund**

**1930–2021** | *Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary Class of 1961*  
George Lund, 90, died May 4 in Steamboat Springs, Colo. Lund served as an air defense artillery officer in the U.S. Army before his call to ministry. He was a pastor, then received his teaching degree and taught high school physics. His favorite job, however, was operating the Steamboat [Colo.] Valley Guest House for 14 years with his wife of 63 years, Alice. He was preceded in death by sons Peter and David, and is survived by his wife, two children and seven grandsons.

**Ronald Bruce MacLennan**

**1944–2021** | *Class of 1991, PhD*  
Ron MacLennan, 76, died Feb. 13 in Lindsborg, Kan. He served congregations in Kansas and was a chaplain and then professor of religion at Bethany College in Lindsborg (1984–2012). He is survived by his wife Marcia, two daughters and four grandsons.

**James Olson**

**1939–2021** | *Class of 1988 ThM*  
James Olson, 81, formerly of Sioux Falls, S.D., died March 13 at a care center in Grand Island, Neb. Olson served as both campus minister and pastor in the upper Midwest. He was a director of children's ministries in a predecessor church body, as well as secretary and rostered ministry coordinator in the South Dakota Synod. Olson is survived by his siblings and several nieces and nephews.

**John Noel Poffinbarger**

**1938–2021** | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1964, 1992 DMin*  
John Poffinbarger, 82, died Feb. 5 in Stevens Point, Wis. He served as a pastor in Wisconsin and Illinois and was associate to the bishop in Milwaukee (Lutheran Church in America). He created a charity that rehabilitated and gave cars to the working poor and those looking for work, and established Drive Your Tractor to Church while serving rural congregations. He is survived by his wife Carol, three children, six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

**Stanton Richards**

**1939–2021** | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1967*  
Stanton Richards, 81, died March 7 in Manitoba, Canada. He served congregations in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and did a year-long urban residency program in Trenton, N.J. He is survived by his wife of 53 years Nadine, five children and grandchildren.

**Robert H. Studtmann**

**1929–2021** | *Class of 1951 Christ Seminary – Seminex*  
Robert Studmen, 92, of Amarillo, Texas, died Feb. 16. He served congregations in Texas, North Carolina and Kansas, and as bishop of the AELC and the Arkansas–Oklahoma Synod of the ELCA. Studtmann was awarded an honorary doctorate by Christ Seminary–Seminex. He also served LSTC as a member of the board of directors. He is survived by Barbara, his wife of 69 years, three children, four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

**Raymond B. Torgersen**

**1926–2021** | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1952*  
Ray Torgerson died Feb. 10 in Estelline, S.D. He was a parish pastor in North Dakota until 1974, when he transferred his ministerial status to the United Church of Christ. He served UCC congregations in North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin and Kansas. He is survived by three sons, three grandchildren and four great-grandchildren and one great-great grandchild. Torgersen was preceded in death by his wife Kathryn and their son.

**Wayne R. Viereck**

**1935–2021** | *Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary Class of 1961, Class of 1977, DMin*  
Wayne Viereck, 85, died March 24 in Tucson, Ariz. In 2017 his book, *Then is Now: Reading the New Testament in the 21st Century* was published. He served parishes in Illinois, Wisconsin and Arizona, and was a board member of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois and spearheaded the development of the Luther Center Senior Living residence in Rockford, Ill. He is survived by his wife of 65 years Patricia, three daughters, four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

**John Wattachanackal**

**1939–2021** | *MA, Class of 2002*  
John Wattachanackal, 81, died Jan. 30 in Elmhurst, Ill. He was born in Njaljyakuzhy, Kerala, India, but lived in the U.S. for 51 years. He was instrumental in forming the Church of South India (CSI) Council in North America, and was a founding member of the CSI Congregation, Chicago. A social worker by profession, he also earned a master of social work and a master of industrial relations from Loyola University Chicago, and an DMin from Trinity International University. He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Mercy, three children, six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

**Kathleen D. (Kadi) Billman**, professor emeritus of pastoral theology, and José David Rodríguez, Augustana Heritage Chair of Global Mission and World Christianity, wrote “A Teacher’s Life Lives On: Remembering Vitor Westhelle” for the April *Currents in Theology and Mission*.



Association Nebraska Chapter. She served as regional director of communications at the chapter for six years. In announcing the award, the organization noted that Chentland “elevated the vision, awareness and revenue of the association by building effective public relations and marketing campaigns, growing sustainable community partnerships, empowering volunteers and advancing public policy initiatives.”

**Kurt Hendel**, Bernard Fischer, Westberg distinguished ministry professor emeritus of Reformation history, presented lectures at area congregations on “Luther’s Advice During a Pandemic” and an adult forum series on “The Lutheran Reformation: The Supporting Cast.”

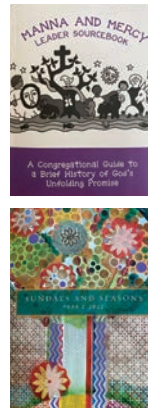
**Eric Kyle**, associate professor; director of contextual education, co-authored “A Supervision of Pliable Presence During a Pandemic,” for *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry*.

**Eunyoung Lim**, assistant professor of New Testament, presented a research proposal, “Take the Child and His Mother and Flee!: Revisiting Joseph’s Border-Crossings and Mission in Matthew 2:13–23,” at the 2021 World Mission Institute.

**Barbara Rossing**, professor of New Testament, gave the keynote address, “Lamb Power: Revelation’s Alternative Power Story” at the

Northeastern Minnesota Synod EcoFaith Summit entitled “Now the Green Blade Rises: Storytelling for the Healing of Creation.” She also spoke about carbon pricing at a memorial hearing for the Northwest Intermountain Synod. She represented the Citizens Climate Lobby Lutheran Action team and Lutherans Restoring Creation.

**Julie Sevig**, content and social media manager, wrote her fourth biography of Daniel Erlander for the series of Augsburg Fortress remakes of his resources. *Manna and Mercy: A Congregational Guide to a Brief History of God’s Unfolding Promise* was released in April. In the recently released Sundays and Seasons (Year C, 2022), she contributed 16 weeks of ideas for the section, “Let the Children Come,” involving children in worship.



**Benjamin Stewart**, Gordon A. Braatz associate professor of worship and director of the Zygon Center for Religion and Science, published “A good earth,” a

reflection on Earth Day and Easter in the April *Living Lutheran*. He also presented “Forty Principles for Preaching at the Beginning of Forty Days of Lent” to the Big Bend Cluster of the ELCA Intermountain Synod.

**Kimberly Wagner**, assistant professor of homiletics and Alex Jacob and Gerda Maria (Swanson) Carlson Chair in Homiletics, presented a workshop “In It Together: Trauma and Faith in These Demanding Days,” and was keynote speaker in the Texas–Louisiana Synod assembly. She also wrote “Third Sunday in Lent: Psalm 19,” “Fourth Sunday in Lent: Psalm 107,” and “Fifth Sunday in Lent: Psalms 51 and 119,” in *Connections: A Lectionary Commentary for Preaching*. Wagner co-authored “The Minor Prophets in Christianity: Habakkuk as a Model for Post-Traumatic Christian Prophetic Preaching,” for the *Oxford Handbook of the Minor Prophets*, and “Dead Ends, Opening Doors, and Wilderness Words: Preaching in and through a Pandemic,” for *Call to Worship: Liturgy, Music, Preaching, and the Arts*.

**Marvin E. Wickware Jr.**, assistant professor of church and society and ethics, wrote “The Labour of Black Love: James Cone, Womanism, and the Future of Black Men’s Theologies,” in the March 12 *Black Theology*.



**Elizabeth Chentland**, director of strategic marketing and communications, was awarded the prestigious 2021 University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Public Health distinguished alumnus award. Chentland was nominated by the Alzheimer’s

**Linda Thomas**, professor of theology and anthropology, gave a presentation for a James Cone “Locus” to students from the Evangelisches Stift in Tübingen, Germany. She also gave a lecture at Elmhurst College: “In Pursuit of Justice: Womanist Non-Binary Perspectives About Intersectionality, Trauma, Lament, and Hope in the USA Context.” She taught a lay adult Bible study called “Intersectionality, Womanist Theology, and #BlackLivesMatter: Standing Ground Against White Supremacy” as an Introduction to Womanist hermeneutics for the Lutheran School of Theology in St. Louis, and she returned to Turner Station, Md., to preach in her home congregation for a women’s day celebration.



Linda Thomas, along with (from left) Marvin Wickware Jr., Eric Kyle and Tom Gaulke, participated in a People’s Lobby Faith Liberation Movement event outside the Cook County Jail. Also participating but not shown: Erik Christensen, Kim Wagner, Klaus–Peter Adam and student Erik Boss.





The Pillar Society member list presented below celebrates all living donors who have expressed intent to include LSTC in their estate. Where one spouse is living and one is deceased, the spouse who has died is marked with a cross.

If you believe there has been an omission or inclusion in error, please contact us at [advancement@lstc.edu](mailto:advancement@lstc.edu). To learn how to include LSTC in your estate contact Bill Myatt, director of philanthropic engagement, at [william.myatt@lstc.edu](mailto:william.myatt@lstc.edu) or 773.256.0761.

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The Rev. Wayne E. Peterson<sup>†</sup> MDiv '46

The Rev. Norman V. Ryding<sup>†</sup> MDiv '59 & Mrs. Nancy Ryding<sup>†</sup>

The Rev. Raymond B. Torgersen<sup>†</sup> BDiv '52 & Mrs. Kathryn Torgersen<sup>†</sup>

Ms. Grace T. Weber<sup>†</sup>



**Jen Stone** (above) joined LSTC's advancement team in April as data services analyst. For the past 10 years Stone has been an advancement services professional with expertise as a Raiser's Edge database administrator. She brings to LSTC experience in collaborating with finance departments and assisting with grant writing and volunteer management. She also worked at the Michiana Humane Society, Center on Halsted, and the Museum of Science and Industry. Stone holds a bachelor's from DeVry University and master's in business administration from Keller Graduate School, with a concentration in information systems management. She is a part-time events and studio photographer, and she and her husband Bruce live in Portage, Ind.

Staff changes effective in April for facility services were also announced. **Bob Berridge** will now serve as senior project manager, facilities on a part-time basis—a gradual transition to retirement at his request. He will focus on the long-term planning necessary to ensure wise stewardship of LSTC facilities. **James Foster** will serve as director of safety, security, and visitor services (front desk). **Mike Huckelberry** is now director of maintenance and engineering, overseeing both housing and the main building. **Frank Perez** is now manager of culinary operations.

### Godspeed

**Andrea Finnegan** concluded her time as vice president for finance and operations in April after three years of service. Controller **Richard Vivian** is serving as the acting VP for finance and operations.

**Martha Stocker**, director of information technology, announced her retirement, effective June 30. Stocker has been at LSTC since 2015, when she started as the software support administrator prior to assuming the director of IT position. "When Bob Berridge hired me almost six years ago, he said 'I want this to be your last job.' How dreams come true," said Stocker, who says she's watched LSTC move light years forward in technology in the past five years.

**Lena Washington**, director of dining services since 2018, accepted a position as senior director of food and nutrition with the Cook County Health Care systems, both Stroger and Providence Hospitals, in March. She will, however, stay on in a part-time role as the senior project manager, dining. This new opportunity draws on her prior experience leading food operations in healthcare, said Aaron Copley-Spivey, human resources director. "Lena has had a significantly positive impact on the Refectory's operations. Her expertise has helped the team establish systems and vendor relations that have allowed the Refectory to adapt to the needs of the community even through the current limitations of the pandemic," Copley-Spivey said.

### LSTC Board of Directors

We wish these departing board of directors members well and offer our gratitude: **Bishop Paul Erickson** (effective Dec. 31, 2020), **Dale Landgren** (effective June 1) and **Rebecca Pallmeyer** (effective Oct. 1). We welcome these new members to the board:

**Wyvetta M. Bullock**, Metropolitan Chicago Synod representative; she is retired from the ELCA Churchwide Office where she most recently served as the executive for administration. Bullock earned her MDiv in 1996 and a DMin in Preaching in 2003, both from LSTC.

**Yehiel Curry**, bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod and Region 5 bishops' representative on the board. Bishop Curry received his MDiv from LSTC in 2013.

**Greg Lewis**, churchwide at-large representative, is a retired attorney with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Regional Counsel and retired as an adjunct professor from the DePaul College of Law. Lewis received his MA degree from LSTC in 2003.



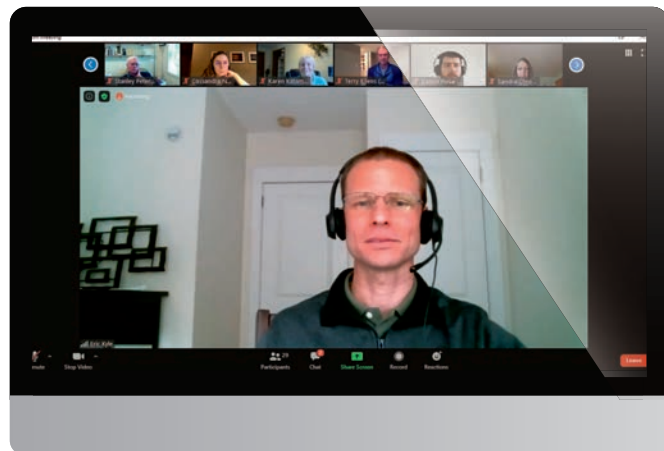
# LSTC Homecoming is October 13–14

All alumni, all classes are welcome back to LSTC for this year’s virtual Homecoming event Oct. 13–14, hosted by the LSTC Alumni Board.

This virtual event will feature an all-class gathering, class hangout/ breakouts and another “Talking About Antiracism” learning session. Alumni celebrating 10, 25, 40 and 50 year reunions will be recognized during the all-class gathering and have a reunion hangout.

Homecoming culminates with the Distinguished Alumni Awards ceremony.

Volunteers are needed to help connect with classmates and host reunions. Contact Jessica Houston, alumni services and events manager, (jhouston@lstc.edu) to volunteer and for more information. 🌟



Last year, alumni had the opportunity to sit in on Eric Kyle’s class.

## Next Seminary Sampler Oct. 25–27

Dates have been set by the admissions staff for two Seminary

Samplers during the 2021–22 academic year—one in the fall and one in the winter. Watch our webpage and other platforms for details about these and possible open houses. Decisions about whether they will be entirely online, in person or hybrid are yet to be made.

The first sampler is Oct. 25–27. The second is March 7–9.

Both will include opportunities to worship with the LSTC community, attend classes, meet faculty and students, get an overview of degree programs, candidacy, housing and financial aid. There will also be assistance with discernment—ministry as a vocation and choosing the right seminary. 🌟

## Scherer Lecture September 28

George R. Hunsberger, professor of missiology at Western Seminary in Holland, Mich., is guest speaker at this year’s Scherer Lecture. He is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), has been a campus minister, a pastor, a missionary team leader in Nairobi, Kenya, a teacher and writer of articles and reviews to missiological, Reformed and Presbyterian journals.



George R. Hunsberger

The lecture will be held at 4 p.m. CDT as a webinar on Zoom and Facebook Live. 🌟

## Save March 10 for the World Mission Institute

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. More details will be available closer to March. 🌟



George Sabra

## Mark your calendar for Vine Deloria Jr. Symposium

The annual Vine Deloria Jr. Symposium hosted by LSTC is Nov. 16–17. Other details were not available at press time but can be found on our website (lstc.edu) closer to the event. 🌟



Erik Christensen, presiding at LSTC's baccalaureate service.



President James Nieman reviews details with Tim Frakes, producer of the commencement video.



A virtual commencement choir made up of students, alumni and staff.



Sam Paul Israel Bose, baccalaureate lector.





# Lutheran School of Theology *at* Chicago

1100 East 55th Street | Chicago, IL 60615  
[www.lstc.edu](http://www.lstc.edu)

*Address Service Requested*

Graduates (and others) were invited to walk the labyrinth on “Graduates’ Day” prior to commencement weekend. The labyrinth was a gift to LSTC from the graduating class of 2018.



SUMMER 2021