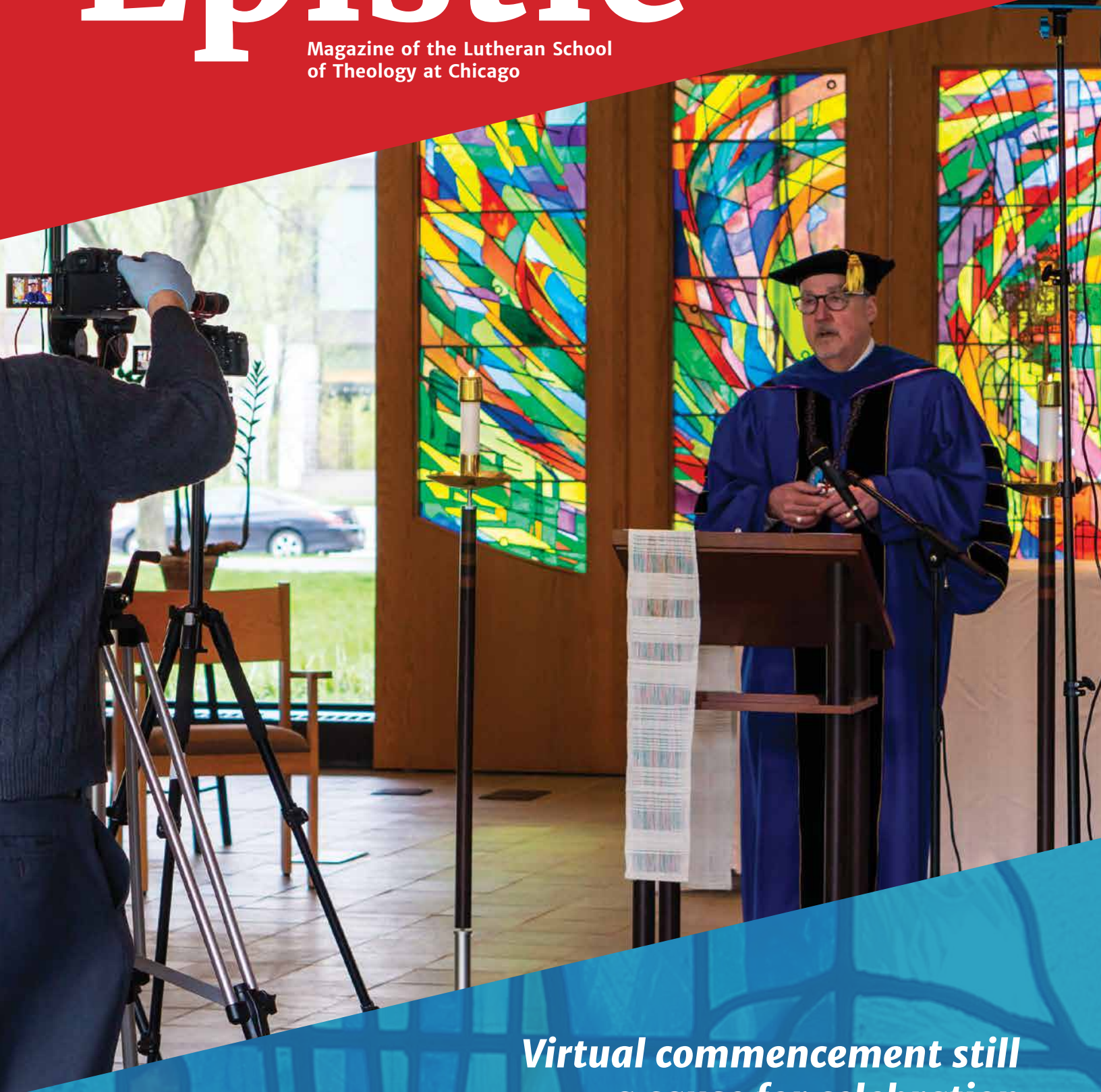


LSTC

SUMMER 2020

Epistle

Magazine of the Lutheran School
of Theology at Chicago



*Virtual commencement still
a cause for celebration*

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear friends in Christ:

We are again witnessing repeated harm and violence toward black persons across America, of which George Floyd's murder was but one instance. The racism on which this nation was built, sustained by white privilege and power, is again hideously apparent for all to see. These public events have also triggered an unremitting pain, fear, and anguish among persons of color in our own community as well. Many at LSTC now deeply worry about what might unfold for their own families and friends, and this anxiety exacts a toll.

Something else is also apparent. Though persons of color have struggled to defeat racism, it is not solely or mainly their problem to solve. White people like me are the source of racism, and it will not change unless we work directly with our siblings of color to confront it. So I am now writing to those who know our predominantly white seminary in the predominantly white ELCA at this moment of *recognition*. We need to recognize what shapes people like me, and then we need to recognize the lasting, substantial change we seek.

First, I recognize that the story of white supremacy shapes me. I regularly benefit from structures that degrade and exploit black persons so I can have more. I thus regard myself and whites like me as better than others and deserving of more. As a result, I enjoy vast privilege and security that, in a self-reinforcing logic, further stoke my sense of superiority. All this lets me insulate myself from what black persons suffer, so these don't pertain to me. And when I am honest about it (rarely), I don't want my privilege to change.

These are disgusting lines. Surely I am better than this—but evidence is to the contrary. Something is wrong when white people like me casually turn from scenes of racial violence or minimize them. Or when we seem respectful about black rage but secretly hope it will subside. Or when we insist that the reactions of black persons should be more peaceful. Or when we rationalize our inaction as a reasonable response to carnage. Or when we muzzle ourselves around white people so we won't be judged as rude or critical.

If you're white like me, I invite you to review the lines above and ask what you'd say of yourself if you were honest. Recognizing this is an essential beginning for white people, but only that. It is useless, though, if it doesn't press to a second recognition: that we must change as white people and the work that will require. It is about this second recognition I now write in my role as president of our seminary. Our school is not subject to my personal will, but it

does affirm a core mission that directly pertains to this very moment.

Our mission is to form visionary leaders to bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ. But a *visionary* is attuned to the world, and *leaders* show the way to thriving, and *good news* is good for all persons of color. Our



James Nieman

mission has a Lutheran shape. But being *Lutheran* is to be “a theologian of the cross [who] calls the thing what it is” (*Heidelberg Disputation, 1518*), like the evil of racism. Our mission is responsive to context and attentive to diversity. But *responsive* is a call to action, while *diversity* matters only with equity and inclusion.

In other words, the very language guiding our school's governance bears an identity and values that should drive us to confront racism and white supremacy. This already is our mission to which I committed myself as president eight years ago. Naming racism and white privilege and equipping students to do this are not optional or elective but core to forming ministers of the gospel today. This is why we focus on antiracism training, intercultural diversity, and hiring that seeks the richness that comes when all voices are at the table.

Yet these are not enough. The change we seek began with persons of color who persisted despite racism, and I am deeply grateful to all at LSTC who have actively worked to pursue the justice so central to our mission. But now, our second recognition must extend these changes across the whole school, for our sake and as a model in our church, neighborhood, and society. In recruitment, courses, formation, executive leadership, and how we spend and govern, the work toward racial justice and reconciliation must be meaningful and lasting. To this future I commit my office and our seminary.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James Nieman". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

James Nieman
President

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Visit www.lstc.edu for more information about LSTC's programs, conferences and special events.

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Cover: President Nieman records his portion of the commencement video in with Tim Frakes Productions.

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Lutheran School of
Theology at Chicago

Eliseo Pérez-Álvarez to join LSTC faculty as associate professor of Lutheran systematic theology and global Lutheranism



Eliseo Pérez-Álvarez

Eliseo Pérez-Álvarez has been appointed associate professor of Lutheran systematic theology and global Lutheranism by the LSTC Board of Directors. He will join the LSTC faculty Jan. 1, 2021, and teach courses in Lutheran Confessions and Theology of the Cross during the spring 2021 semester.

“Dr. Pérez-Álvarez brings many strengths as he returns to LSTC, where he earned his

PhD with distinction,” said Esther Menn, dean of academic affairs. “He is a recognized expert in Kierkegaard and an experienced teacher and mentor with deep roots in global Lutheranism, especially in the Caribbean and Latin America. In addition to his teaching scholarship, he has served as pastor of congregations in Mexico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. I celebrate the many gifts the Dr. Pérez-Álvarez will contribute to our faculty and students, and I look forward to welcoming him back to the LSTC community.”

Pérez-Álvarez has most recently served as associate professor of theology (as an ELCA missionary) at the United Theological College of the University of the West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica. He previously taught for the Advanced Latino Theological Education (ALTE) program of the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education (SCUPE); the Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest (LSPS) in Austin, Texas; at the Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico; and at the Seminario Teológico Presbiteriano de México; along with a variety of adjunct and summer engagements, including work in the DMin program at McCormick Theological Seminary.

He also has extensive administrative experience including directing the ALTE program of SCUPE, being Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) coordinator for LSPS, and directing El Faro, the Presbyterian publishing house in Mexico.

A prolific author, he has published over a dozen books. These include *A volutar la tortilla; método de la predicación anticolonialista*, Foreword by Mitri Raheb, Afterword by Cherie White (2020); *El muro de tortilla; migración y mitos*, Foreword by Ofelia Ortega (2019); *¿Eres o te haces? una probadita a la homosexualidad y la Biblia*, Foreword by Esther Baruja, Afterword by Ted Jennings (2017); *Introducción a la Última Cena y el Banquete de la Creación*, Foreword by Elsa Tamez (2012); *A Vexing Gadfly: the Late Kierkegaard on Economic Matters*, Foreword by Enrique Dussel (2009). He also has published numerous articles and chapters in books.

Sandra H. Nelson appointed vice president for advancement



Sandra H. Nelson

Sandra H. Nelson, CFRE, was appointed vice president for Advancement by the LSTC Board of Directors, and began serving June 15.

“I am pleased to welcome Sandra to LSTC,” said James Nieman, president. “She brings deep experience both as a fundraiser and as a departmental leader, most recently as vice president of the Foundation of Concordia University, Chicago. I look

forward to the ways she will lead our fine Advancement Team.”

Nelson brings 30 years of fundraising experience to her new role. She became a Certified Fundraising Executive in 1996. Prior to Concordia University, she was president of the foundation and vice president for development at Elmhurst Memorial Healthcare, Elmhurst, Ill., where she achieved a 1500% increase in donors over nine years. Nelson has been a successful fundraiser for Advocate Healthcare, Oak Brook, Ill., The Chicago Community Trust, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation and the Presbytery of Chicago.

Nelson said, “I have known about LSTC for a long time and its commitment to form leaders for a public church. This position brings together my love of the church with my professional background. I look forward to working with people of faith to shape those who will go out to serve the church as leaders.”

Nelson is a graduate of Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., and has done additional coursework and certifications with the School of Philanthropy, Indiana University, Indianapolis; Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University; and Graham School, University of Chicago.

Brooke Petersen appointed MDiv/MAM/MA program director, candidacy coordinator, lecturer

Brooke Petersen (2006, MDiv) was appointed MDiv/MAM/MA program director, coordinator of candidacy and lecturer by the LSTC Board of Directors. She began her three-year term at LSTC July 15.

“I am delighted that Dr. Petersen will be joining the LSTC faculty as the MDiv/MAM/MA program director and coordinator of candidacy,” said Esther Menn, dean of academic affairs. “In addition to these administrative roles, she will be teaching courses in her area of expertise, pastoral care and theology. Her experience with spiritual



Brooke Petersen

formation in will serve our students well in their preparation as leaders.

Dr. Petersen has been an auxiliary faculty member and guest lecturer at LSTC since 2017. She also taught at McCormick Theological Seminary and New Brunswick Theological Seminary and has been a guest lecturer at North Park University and Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary.

She received a PhD in pastoral theology, personality and culture from Garrett in 2017, writing a dissertation entitled “Religious Estrangement and Return in the Experience of Queer Persons.” She is a psychotherapist at The Spiritual Life Center in Chicago; a developer and coach for Living Well, Leading Well: Clergy Support, Living Compass; and a volunteer therapist for Porchlight Counseling Services: Serving Victims of Sexual Abuse.

“I am honored to begin this new role at LSTC,” Petersen said. “LSTC was formative in shaping me for my vocation and I am excited to accompany students as they navigate their own degree programs and the candidacy process. I have loved teaching at LSTC for the last three years and look forward to sharing my passion for clinical psychology and pastoral theology to support the formation of the next generation of leaders in the church.”

California pastor receives Confessor of Christ Award

Stephanie Jaeger (2006, MDiv) was chosen for LSTC’s 2020 Confessor of Christ Award. The LSTC faculty conferred the award for Jaeger’s Christian witness addressing issues of homelessness, housing shortage and hunger in North Hollywood, Calif., and the wider community. She is a leader for a public church. The award is typically presented during LSTC’s commencement ceremony so it will be presented at a later date.

Jaeger is pastor of St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church in North Hollywood, known for its longstanding commitment to LGBTQ rights, Deaf culture, the arts and community engagement, especially around homelessness and immigration. With her congregation, she founded and leads NoHo Home Alliance (NHHA), a community organizing non-profit that mobilizes residents to meet the needs of the homeless through pop-up drop-in centers at several locations. The highly effective centers offer showers, clothing, haircuts, toiletries, two hot meals, a bag lunch, case management and a mailing address. With other partners they offer medical and mental health care

and access to medically assisted drug treatment, HIV/AIDS testing and vaccines. Its programs are relational, community-based, volunteer run, small scale and replicable.

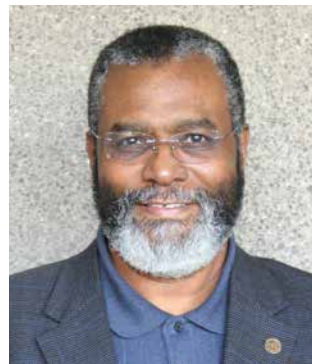
By building trust within her community, she was able to lead the neighborhood to approve a 40-unit building of permanent supportive housing for persons experiencing homelessness.

Jaeger also serves as the vice president and faith representative to the NoHo Neighborhood Council. She is faith representative to the Steering Committee of the San Fernando and Santa Clarita Valleys Homeless Coalition, board chair of the North Hollywood Interfaith Food Pantry, and part of the Mayor’s Interfaith Collective among other community involvements.

She has served as senior pastor at Augustana Lutheran Church of Hyde Park in Chicago, and pastor of Mt. Olive Lutheran Church and Preschool in Santa Monica, Calif. She holds a PhD in German and has taught at universities in Germany, Canada and the U.S. She recently completed an MFA in Creative Writing and is writing her first novel about refugee and immigrant experiences in the wake of WWII and today.

The Confessor of Christ Award originated at Christ Seminary–Seminex, a predecessor school of LSTC. It is given to “a Christian individual whose commitment to Christ Jesus and the Gospel manifests itself through extraordinary personal sacrifice for the sake of Jesus Christ and the Gospel or exemplary witness to Christ Jesus and the Gospel by selfless service to others.”

Clarence Atwood Jr. to receive LSTC Distinguished Service Award



Clarence Atwood Jr.

LSTC will present the 2020 Distinguished Service Award to Clarence Atwood Jr. at a Board of Directors ceremony in November.

The award recognizes Atwood’s significant service to the seminary as a member of the board from 2010–2019 and as the chairperson of its Administration and Finance Committee from 2013–2019. He also served on LSTC’s Audit Committee

and, in 2013–2014 was secretary of the board. He currently serves on LSTC Foundation Board of Trustees.

Atwood was the director of internal audit at the University of Chicago. He is an active member of Zion Lutheran Church in Tinley Park, Ill., where he is the financial secretary.

Echols Preaching Prize shared by three MDiv students

Three students preached during the 2020 Echols Preaching Prize Celebration April 16 via Zoom since the community was unable to gather in person in Augustana Chapel.

These three share the annual preaching prize named for former president James Kenneth Echols: Elle Dowd, Melissa Hrdlicka and Care Lawrence.

The theme this year was “water” and each finalist engaged the theme in theologically rich and exciting ways. The preaching prize began in the 2007–08 academic year, and has historically been announced each year at commencement, accompanied by a \$500 award. In recent years, the prize has gone to more than one recipient.

The James Kenneth Echols Prize for Excellence in Preaching 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 the contributions of Echols.

The sermons are available on LSTC's YouTube channel.

Covid-19 shuts down campus, but learning continued

In March LSTC began a series of moves that, along with the rest of the city, state and country, was a response to Covid-19. A Viral Outbreak Response Team was formed and discussed measures to keep the community safe.

As the second week in March ended, staff began working from home. Classes were moved online, and that is how students and faculty ended the semester.

In his March 20 email to the community, President James Nieman wrote, “We continue to evaluate how our community can best respond to the COVID-19 pandemic as responsible neighbors, with care and concern for our students, faculty and staff. Toward that end and in compliance with Governor Pritzker’s ‘stay at home’ instruction this past weekend, the following changes took effect starting 5 p.m. on Saturday, March 21...”

The changes included 1) courses moved online; 2) previously scheduled events postponed, canceled or reconfigured virtually; 3) Commencement determined to not be an in-person event; 4) daily worship for the remainder of the semester to be online, with sermons found on LSTC's website (lstc.edu) and YouTube channel; 5) library closed; 6) LRWC closed, with services through email and video conferencing; 7) restricted access to main building; 8) Refectory moved to take out only, and then closed; 9) mailroom, on-campus housing and Katie's

Closet food pantry continued to provide services. In early June, the Refectory reopened for pickup and delivery (through Grubhub).

Safety and health precautions were taken throughout the facility and protocol for accessing the building and offices were put into practice. At press time, staff, faculty and students were still working remotely.

Ben Stewart named director of Zygon Center for Religion and Science

Benjamin M. Stewart, Gordon A. Braatz Associate Professor of Worship, has been appointed director of the Zygon Center for Religion and Science (ZCRS), effective July 1.

“I am delighted that Ben will be leading the Zygon Center,” said Esther Menn, dean of academic affairs. “His scholarship and teaching bring together religion and science in organic and generative ways. I look forward to the new ideas and energy he will bring to ZCRS.”

Stewart said, “Zygon has a tremendous legacy in fostering scholarly conversations about the biggest questions humanity is asking, and I am profoundly honored to serve as the center's fifth director.”

He highlighted the roles of science and religion in some of the most urgent questions of this era. “Look at race and racism, responses to the pandemic, and environmental justice,” Stewart said, “and you can see how religious and scientific ways of knowing have sometimes been crucial for progress and at other times needed serious correction and challenge.”

Stewart said he sees the Zygon Center as well-positioned for advancing these conversations in the coming years.

He joined the LSTC faculty in 2009 and since 2016 has served as director of advanced studies. Mark Swanson will now serve in this role, also effective July 1.

Stewart is a leading scholar in the areas of natural burial practices as well as the connection between ecological and liturgy. His book, *A Watered Garden: Christian Worship and Earth's Ecology* (Augsburg Fortress, 2011) calls for a sacramental approach to creation. He has published numerous articles and book chapters. He is a sought after speaker and presenter on topics related to ecology and liturgy.

Established in 1988, Zygon Center is a partnership of LSTC and the Center for Advanced Study in Religion and Science. It is dedicated to relating religious traditions and scientific knowledge in order to gain insight into the origins, nature, and destiny of humans and their environment, and to realize the common goal of a world in which love, justice, and responsible patterns of living prevail. Seeking to harness religion and science together in this shared purpose, Zygon Center takes its distinctive name from the Greek word for “yoking” or “joining.” Zygon Center brings together scientists, theologians, philosophers, and other scholars to address basic questions and issues of human concern.

'A love letter to the Class of 2020'

Virtual Commencement still a cause for celebration

By Julie B. Sevig



Kadi Billman speaks to graduates.

It wasn't what the graduates of 2020 had dreamed of and deserved, but a different Commencement went on as scheduled for 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, May 17—graduates and their family and friends watched a video instead of sitting side by side in St. Thomas the Apostle's sanctuary. Some graduates held watch parties, and celebrated with a dash of creativity.

It was likely the first year in the school's long history that Commencement wasn't held in person. Covid-19 caused the 160th academic year to come to an awkward end. A stay-at-home order from the governor meant that classes had met online since March 21.

Erik Christensen, pastor to the community, had written this to graduates "Over the course of the many conversations... one theme consistently emerged: the reality that there is no substitute for what is being lost in terms of the ability to gather... be handed your diploma in person, to linger with friends and take photos with faculty.

"We all wish that this year could have ended with those cherished traditions and we are all grieving the loss of that opportunity. Once we were able to honestly acknowledge the grief associated with these losses, it became possible to consider what might yet be done—both now and in the future—to celebrate this year's commencement to the best of our ability."

And indeed the community did. The video ceremony (accessible on LSTC's YouTube channel) included a touching and powerful welcome by President James Nieman, a virtual walk to St. Thomas featuring photos of community life contributed by many, presentation of graduates and the conferring of degrees, congratulations from some surprise guests, farewells from faculty and staff. And as a centerpiece a love-filled Commencement address by Kadi Billman. In fact, it was entitled, "A love letter to the Class of 2020."

"It would take time to enumerate all the gifts we have seen in this graduating class, but what I most want to say

is this: We at LSTC have witnessed your passion to fill this beautiful, wounded world with God's love and justice: in your scholarship, sermons and songs, through your service in congregations, community agencies, classrooms, hospitals, prisons, on the streets and—in these last days—in the ways you have labored to sustain connection in separation and to bear the losses of this time with both honesty and dignity... not least the loss of the graduation ceremony many of you imagined would take place," Billman said.

She recalled the prophet Jeremiah's encouragement to his grieving people to plant their gardens in exile, away from home and cherished traditions, to nurture life in any way possible.

"We have seen you do this, even when your gardens have been watered with tears (Ps. 126: 6)... We miss you, and hold you close in our hearts as we too watch this service spatially separated from one another on graduation day, thanking God and rejoicing for all that you have to offer the world. It is all mixed together as is so often the case in life: absence and presence, grief and gladness; disappointment and thanksgiving; all co-existing."

Billman told the graduates that LSTC sends them out as leaders who can "bear ambiguity and be truthful about hard realities and choices that confront us..." and saying that the wounds of the pandemic would call us to "recognize and tend a much wider connectedness within and across all borders, with humans and all planetary life; to redress inequities so glaringly visible; and to live a resurrection faith, which is not reducible to the restoration of the life that went before, but faith that inspires a life lived toward a future imagined and sought. This is what we pray that you will bring to the communities you will serve: your faith-full imagination and courageous resolve, with the credentials you have worked so hard for and the gifts you have.

"We pray that what you have experienced at LSTC has contributed to your capacities for the kind of leadership the world needs 'for such a time as this' (Esther 4:14b). We send you into the next season of your lives with our gratitude, our love, and our blessing."

Efforts are being made to gather graduates together in person in the future, and this year's class is welcome to return next spring to walk with the class of 2021 or in subsequent years.

Also during the Commencement video and in other virtual gatherings, as is traditional, retiring faculty/staff were honored—this year Kadi Billman (featured in the Spring issue) and Patricia Bartley (page 16).

And so it was for all who usually gather on the third Sunday of May, a time of mixed emotions, elevated due to the circumstances. As Billman said, "...The circumstances of this graduation are what none of us wanted, and this graduation may, of all graduations, be the one most remembered: the one where the intermingling of pain and pride, sorrow and joy made it impossible to distinguish the sound of tears from the shouts of laughter (Ezra 3:13)."

MASTER OF ARTS



Tammy Jackson



Wu Mee



Veronica John
Mwakasungura

**Congratulations to
LSTC's newest
alumni/ae!**

MASTER OF ARTS IN MINISTRY



Annette Hernandez



Karen Katamay



Lora Salley

Kristin Ashley Bartlett
(Photo not available)

Note: Because a significant portion of LSTC students are completing capstone internships this year (10) or have delayed assignment (2), the fall assignment process, which usually has smaller numbers, will be larger.

MASTER OF DIVINITY (with synod assignments known at press time)



Corey Bergman –
Delaware-Maryland



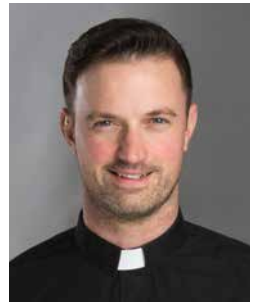
Ruby Burwell Lee



Ian Coen-Frei



Makayla Marinack
Dahleen –
Northern Illinois



Adam Dowd



Danielle Dowd



Morgan Gates



Julie Grafe



Debra Hartfield



Vickie Johnson

MASTER OF DIVINITY (continued)



**Paisley Le Roy –
Southeast Minnesota**



**Troy Medlin –
Chicago Metropolitan**



Maija Mikkelsen



**Bristol Huffman –
Reading**



**David Rebey –
Greater Milwaukee**



**Jose Rodriguez Paez –
Chicago Metropolitan**



**Alexander Ross –
Northern Great Lakes**



Ole Schenk



Nicholas Schmidlin



**Madeline Tallman –
Delaware-Maryland**

Comments graduates made on social media appear throughout these pages.



“We are ready for LSTC’s graduation! So many thanks to all the people who helped make today possible! Today is marked by decorations, treats, flowers and cards sent by loved ones from all parts of my life. In about 15 minutes, we’ll turn on Zoom and watch the carefully curated graduation video that the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago put together with friends and family from all over. My heart is full and I DID IT, Y’ALL!!!”

—Morgan Gates, MDiv graduate

“These last four years have taught me so much. I’ve had the honor of working with amazing faculty, learning alongside brilliant future leaders, serving three congregations, meeting some of my closest friends and my wonderful partner, traveling from east to west coast and all the way to Taizé, and SO much more. This online graduation isn’t how I expected to graduate but we know our God works in mysterious ways! So it’s happening... I’ve mastered divinity!”

—Paisley LeRoy, MDiv graduate

MASTER OF THEOLOGY



Kerstin Hedlund



Johncy Joseph

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY IN PREACHING



Katherine Johnson

**Gisela Sjolholm
(Photo not available)**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY



Ayse Arslan-Cinar



Ki-Min Bang



Denis Betarer Ndoe



Yasir Bilgin



Thomas Gaulke



Lydia Hernandez-Marcial



Si Khaw



Yoseob Song



“Stoked to graduate today with a PhD... It’s been a long, weird and winding ride. I’m also incredibly grateful to have had the honor of teaching as an auxiliary faculty person in Public Church II alongside the amazing Dr. Linda Thomas. I am stoked about this graduating class of MDiv seniors, and for the amazing, beautiful things that are about to take place in the church and the world through them! These folks are incredibly gifted and imaginative and passionate. The future looks bright with them as our leaders...”

—Tom Gaulke, PhD graduate



“Today I graduated with an MDiv from Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. I am thankful for the path that took me here, and all the people whose journeys intersected with mine along the way—peers, professors, staff of LSTC, for your encouragement, provocations, prayers, challenges to learn and grow. Thankful for faith working through love, and love active in community. Many particular thanks to the great crowd of witnesses along the way... and a special thanks to Troy Medlin my fiancé. ‘Now Thank We All Our God.’ ‘What a Marvelous Thing You’ve Done.’ (–Hawkins)”

—Ole Schenk, MDiv graduate

“Five years ago, I was walking across the stage to get my ThM diploma. Today I was supposed to do the same, but now I will watch a symbolic ceremony while sipping a cup of coffee at home. Definitely not what I had in mind when I called my 2015 graduation a “fake graduation.” Back then, the real deal was the PhD ceremony. Even if the COVID-19 version is not what I expected, I’m glad to have something which can mark this milestone in my life.”

Lydia Hernandez-Marcial, PhD graduate

“I am so grateful to my Doctor Mother Esther Menn, and celebrate with Dr. Lydia Hernández under the same advisor and with Dr. Yoseob Song, whose PhD is in interfaith and World Christianity but whose knowledge deserves honorary PhD in Biblical Studies. Thank you all my teachers and friends at Chicago.”

—Ki-Min Bang, PhD graduate

MDiv student Julie Grafe is ready for what comes next

By Jan Boden



Julie Grafe on graduation day.

The weekend of May 16–17 was a big one for Julie Grafe. On May 16, she learned that she is approved for ministry by the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Candidacy. And on May 17, she graduated from LSTC's master of divinity program.

Frankly, she had expected the weekend to be even bigger. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, LSTC cancelled the in-person baccalaureate service and commencement ceremony. Instead of the excitement of being together with her classmates and LSTC faculty and staff, Grafe and her family celebrated at home, watching the video LSTC pre-recorded. It was released on YouTube at 2:30 p.m., the time graduation would have taken place in person.

"This is a bittersweet time. It's bittersweet that it's here and that it can't happen the way we planned," she said.

Grafe had a lot to celebrate, especially with family, friends and mentors who supported her in her journey to and through seminary. She hopes to "walk" during commencement 2021 and hopes there will be at least a few of her classmates walking with her.

Difficult discernment

Grafe comes from a long line of pastors and "knew they were regular people." Still, that knowledge didn't make her own discernment of her call to pastoral ministry any easier. She also believes that the spirit doesn't let go of you.

The seed of her call was planted by seminarians. From the interns and field workers at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Evanston, Ill., where she grew up, to LSTC interns at her home congregation, Holy Spirit Lutheran Church in Lincolnshire, Ill., Grafe always loved being around seminarians. She loved the energy and new ideas that they brought to ministry. They nurtured her sense of being called to similar ministry, herself.

She didn't trust that call for many years. She became a nurse and then worked in management and process improvement in health care for 25 years.

"I didn't think I was smart enough. Plus, we had one pastor each generation in my family. My cousin, Hubert (1973, MDiv), was a pastor so I figured my generation was covered."

It took others affirming her gifts for ministry before Grafe could acknowledge, tentatively, that this was her call.

"One day, I said to my mom all that I had been thinking, about not being smart enough, how this generation was 'covered' and mom said to me, 'We haven't had a woman.' Then one day when I was working on something at church, the pastor, out of the blue said, 'You should go to seminary.' I wanted to say no, but I couldn't say no. So I said thank you."

Grafe was still looking for clear signs that God was calling her to ministry. She signed up for a Diakonia class as part of her discernment. On the way to the first class she stopped at an intersection and saw the street sign, Burning Bush Road.

"I was looking for a sign and there it was, literally, a sign!" she said.

Even her teenage children affirmed her call before she told them that she had visited LSTC to talk with the admissions director. Her son, Ben, wrote on a big whiteboard, "You're going to be a pastor" and said, "That's your sign." She has kept that sign while she has been at LSTC.

Embracing seminary and her gifts

Grafe was a commuter student who made the Grand Hallway her living room when she was on campus.

"I would just settle in there and talk with people as I did my work. I also built relationships. I think that was easier for me to do as someone who had a career before coming to seminary. I really wanted to connect while I was at seminary. I embraced the time of learning and tried to stay present to what was happening."

Grafe embraced a wide range of opportunities. She was the Commuter representative on the Masters Students Association (MSA) and served on the Homiletics Search Committee that recommended Kimberly Wagner for her current position at LSTC. One J-Term she went to Holden Village for Ben Stewart's Liturgical Landscapes course on earth cycles and liturgical cycles. Attending the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference with other LSTC students was also a powerful experience for her.



Grafe's family let the neighborhood know about this accomplishment.

She especially recalled the “aha” moments that changed her perspective.

“Pastor Michael Russell (1999, MDiv) came to our Public Church class. What he taught us and what I learned in the Crossroads Antiracism Training were huge. They helped me understand power.”

“The other thing I carry with me comes from Theology I, the first theology class I ever took. It’s from Vítor Westhelle, who taught us that we co-spire with God. He said,

‘God in-spires breath—your first breath. You breathe and co-spire with God until you ex-pire your last breath.’ I sat with my mom as she ex-pired her last breath in January 2017. And it was just as Vítor said. We co-spire with the Holy Spirit. We do all this together. We do this as a community. I am wondering how can we co-spire better together?”

Contextual Education (congregational seminarian) also has been an important to her. It’s when she was able to explore and take risks while “being grounded in what we

know.” Her final year internship has helped Grafe claim the gifts that come naturally to her.

“On spiritual gift inventories it always showed I had the gift of hospitality and I thought, ‘I want to do more than just bake cookies for people.’ Now I know that hospitality goes beyond entertainment and being nice. It is God’s invitation to be in and of the world. God’s grace is for everyone and we need to make that happen.”

Now that she’s approved for ordination to Word and Sacrament ministry, her name will be submitted to the ELCA Conference of Bishops at the Fall Assignment, the next step in receiving a call to a congregation and being ordained.

“I am so grateful for the time at LSTC. I’m glad to be done with this and sad to be done with this... and I didn’t do it. It was God working through me. I’m not sure what comes next but I’m ready.”

Moments from 2020 Commencement



Pictured left: 2020 MDiv graduates celebrate together via Zoom the night before Commencement. Upper right, Yehiel Curry, bishop and LSTC graduate, records his greeting to the graduates. Graduates posted on social media their own creative ways of viewing and celebrating Commencement: Morgan Gates (lower right) ate commencement cupcakes; Makayla Marinack Dahleen (bottom middle) watched graduation in alphabetical order, seated between cardboard cutouts of Ian Coen-Frei and Adam Dowd.

Finding love at LSTC

Class of 2020 includes four couples

By Julie B. Sevig

Plenty of pastors through the decades have met their future spouse during the seminary years. This year, LSTC had four couples among a relatively small graduating class. Their stories indicate how intertwined their lives are with one another. And they agree that the seminary community strengthened their relationship and launched them into the future.



Sarah and Ian Coen-Frei

Ian and Sarah Coen-Frei: Refectory proposal

Though they didn't graduate together this year, Ian (2020, MDiv) and Sarah Coen-Frei (2018, MA) were first-year seminarians together. In May they celebrated Ian's graduation from their home in St. Paul, Minn., where they began sheltering in place in mid-March following the announcement that seminary classes were moved online for the remainder of the year.

They had been living separately this year, Sarah working at her Minnesota job as development coordinator at JustUS Health, and Ian finishing his final year at seminary. They were happy to be back in the same space, saying with convincing confidence that going from famine to feast—living in separate states to being together constantly—hasn't had any ill effects.

When they began seminary, they hung out with about eight other first-year students. When Ian asked who wanted to join him mornings in the Refectory to read and study scripture. Sarah said yes.

Their relationship was formed around that foundation of reading scripture together. They started dating in October of their first year, and she proposed one evening in March at that their usual Refectory table, along the window and near the dish room. She had embossed a Bible with Ian's new married name, and inside wrote a quote from Martin Luther about marriage. An engagement ring was tied to the page

divider. He said yes to her text asking him to meet her at their table, and yes to her proposal.

They married less than a year later in Grand Forks, N.D. On Jan. 6, 2018, the high temperature was -21 degrees.

It hadn't taken long that first year of seminary for Sarah to realize she might want to explore something more romantic with Ian.

"I asked him if he'd be interested in exploring that path," she remembers.

"I said yeah, but let's take small steps. Let's take things slow. Well, you see how that worked out," Ian joked.

It turns out seminary is a pretty good place to dive deep into relationships. Lots of talk about feelings on a deep level, they said. "It gave me an opportunity to see how Ian cared for friends and how he thought about things," Sarah said.

"It gave me a chance to hear about Sarah's passions, for what she cared about, especially in social work," he added.

"There was a lot of crying in classrooms," they remembered. And that wasn't even in clinical pastoral education, which they also did together.

LSTC was a supportive backdrop to their engagement, wedding planning and wedding. When Ian said "yes," they immediately told their seminary neighbors and went out to celebrate. Sarah remembers creating a fuss in Ray Pickett's class the next day as news of the engagement spread. Their wedding shower was in the student lounge, attended by their professors. And even on that frigid January day, members of the community made the trek to North Dakota for the wedding.

"Adam and Elle Dowd had already been married several years and supported and affirmed our marriage as a thing that can work. We had this whole group of people to lean on. Maddie (Tallman) and Corey (Bergman) were ushers. So many people helped plan our wedding liturgy," Sarah said.

"At seminary you meet so many incredible people. You share a transformational experience and might share similar core beliefs and faith. So many meaningful, long-lasting, and valuable relationships are formed at seminary. For us, that's been structured as a marriage. We are continuing to nurture the friendships, mentorships, and other relationships that have come from our seminary community. They bring us so much joy and enrich our lives."



Adam, Jessica, Alice and Elle Dowd

Adam and Elle Dowd: ‘Our work will always be collaborative’

Adam and Elle Dowd came to seminary together—Elle on the track for an MDiv since age 7, Adam with not nearly that destination history.

They met as undergrads at Iowa State in an Old Testament class. Adam was an art and design major who had a background in the military and a non-denominational church. When Adam asked to study with Elle for that challenging class she was suspicious, wondering if he was a slacker just needing help.

When he uncharacteristically missed the final for the class they were taking due to a mix up, she offered him her notes to study. He generously offered food and help moving into her sorority house. She mostly blew him off until visiting his apartment and seeing a python, a huge fish and a puggle. “This dude practically has a zoo in his apartment,” she recalls thinking.

After going out on what may or may not have been “a date,” they talked all night, hung out nearly every day thereafter and within months got engaged. He was leaving for the military and they decided they were going to be “in it or not.” A long-distance relationship without marriage as the goal wasn’t going to happen.

They did Bible studies together, and early on Adam recognized Elle’s call to ministry and gifts for leadership. He credits both Elle and their professor for his “conversion experience” that propelled them both toward ministry.

They have two daughters, Alice and Jessica, both adopted from Sierra Leone. During their first year at seminary their energy was focused on getting Alice to the United States. Jessica came next and was baptized in the Augustana Chapel font by Dr. Linda Thomas, with classmate Maddie Tallman preaching and chosen as a godmother.

Both said the LSTC community has been a huge support system.

“We’ve been to, and in, each other’s weddings, godparents...” said Elle. “This community IS Jessica’s faith community. It’s all she has ever known. Alice, on the other hand, has lots of communities, including Seminarians for Justice, which she sometimes attends by herself.”

As seminarians on the same track—Adam and Elle were always on the go to class, CPE, internships, often at the same time, which meant they had to rely on the LSTC community. Classmates walked the girls to camp, drove them to swim lessons, taught them guitar and piano.

The Army and the Public Church Fellow program made it financially possible for them to attend seminary at the same time. “We’ve had a lot of support, from family and friends.”

“It’s like a commune. We live and share stuff,” Elle said. “When we make soup, we make extra and offer it. We swap healthy meals.” Their annual Christmas party is also a piano recital for the girls, Adam said.

“We could have done seminary online somewhere, but we wanted this residential experience,” Elle said, adding that one of the perks of living in LSTC housing was Creation Courtyard. “It’s gated but everyone who lives there shares our values, including so many people from all over the world so our girls weren’t the only ones from West Africa. We know all our neighbors. They’re seminary people.”

Both Adam and Elle say that the fabric of LSTC is everyone doing and giving back and it all equals out. “We give, but then we don’t feel bad asking for help. It’s not perfect, and there can be drama and inequities, but our class is very close,” she said. “It is approaching an ideal way to be in community together.”

They’ll likely serve separate congregations, but are open to serving together.

“Wherever we land—our work will always be collaborative because we live together,” Adam said. “That’s just part of it.”



Troy Medlin and Ole Schenk

Troy Medlin & Ole Schenk: ‘Mutual flourishing’

Troy Medlin and Ole Schenk weren’t looking for love during Orientation Week, but they trace their relationship back to the fall of 2016.

“Like so many people, we weren’t looking for someone, but while you’re out in the quad during orientation who knows what happens?” Troy said. “When you’re not looking for it, there it is.”

They started getting interested in one other during Gospel Choir practice. “We both noticed each other’s passion and joy and the way we loved singing in choir. It drew us together.”

One thing led to another, and they found themselves spending more time together. “We found a sense of encouragement and joy in our shared vocations. Being in seminary together and training to be pastors together is an incredible gift,” he said.

Troy, whose cheerfulness lit up the Refectory during his time working there, is well known for proud Sandwich, Ill., roots. He comes from a close family, and has a passion

for preaching and politics. He started seminary as a non-Lutheran but claimed a Lutheran identity in seminary.

Ole is also a gifted preacher who exudes a can-do, giving attitude he says comes from his farm roots in Saskatchewan, Canada. He served as a YAGM (ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission), and his internship at Augsburg University in Minneapolis, and Troy's internship at Christ Lutheran on Capitol Hill in St. Paul, Minn., overlapped for a semester.

Ole is in the process of switching from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, where he was approved for ministry, to the ELCA and its candidacy process. Both graduates hope to land calls in Chicago.

They became engaged Oct. 26 at Promontory Point, with classmate Ian Coen-Frei taking photos and a celebratory breakfast with LSTC friends and family. "We proposed to each other, both of us getting down on one knee and proposing to each other," Troy said. "It was such a beautiful day."

Their wedding was to have been July 18 in Augustana Chapel with Erik Christensen, pastor to the community, presiding, but was changed to a small wedding in the quad due to the pandemic, with a larger celebration at a later date.

"We'll have lots of stories to tell many years from now about when we were engaged and the whole world was shut down," Troy said.

Both are reflective about how the seminary process, especially milestones like CPE and internships, have strengthened their relationship. As they move into the future, they say they will continue to lean on each other "for support and mutual flourishing."

"We're committed to each other's ministry that will likely be shared yet different," Troy said. "We'll let the other explore their vocation, and have one another to help us when we're navigating uncertain challenges that will surely come up in ministry."



Maddie Tallman and Corey Bergman

Maddie Tallman & Corey Bergman: 'Getting married during seminary was a hoot'

Maddie Tallman, from Maryland, and Corey Bergman, from Minnesota, met on a CTA bus as their Orientation groups returned to campus from excursions showing students how to use public transit.

They had a lot of classes together and their core group grew closer, "especially as we navigated some pretty intense moments, like the 2016 election and Standing Rock," Maddie said. "And Corey and I grew closer too."

They officially started dating in October of 2016, and in the three years between dating and getting married, they shared life and seminary milestones they describe as "joyous moments and challenging times."

"We were each growing into our own pastoral identities while still rooting for each other," Corey said.

They got engaged right after coming home from Sarah and Ian Coen-Frei's wedding. Corey had ordered a ring a few months prior, and it had arrived the weekend of their wedding. When they got back to Chicago after a 15-hour drive, Corey proposed.

One challenge was securing nearby internships, and when Maddie's initial site fell through she also lost her housing. Their bishops said no to them living together. They decided to get married at the courthouse with just parents present, but kept the original wedding plans too.

"We had planned this whole thing, and I was not going to let church politics take it away from me," Maddie said. "So even though we were legally married, we also got married surrounded by God and our community in August of 2019. And it was a huge blast. I wouldn't have changed a thing. Getting married during seminary was a hoot. And very visible."

She and Corey compared it to what Bishop Yehiel Curry taught their Public Church 2 class—that everything for pastors is public. So was their relationship.

"It was a lot more public than we anticipated because both of us were seminarians, working in the church, and engaged in community organizing," she said, adding that it wasn't a bad thing, but different than a non-clergy/seminarian couple. It positioned them to support and challenge one another, and encourage each other to say difficult but necessary things. "And we had/have amazing seminary friends to encourage and support us as well," Corey added.

Maddie credits LSTC with helping her become the church leader she is, and for introducing her to community organizing and not hiding behind privilege. The community also helped her during a critical time in her life.

"When I experienced a major health crisis while on internship, and was removed from the community by more than 700 miles, LSTC showed up for me in so many ways. Between organizing a GrubHub gift card to make sure we were fed, to countless prayers and messages and phone calls, the hardest few weeks of my life were not spent alone. I will be forever grateful to the community for helping me and Corey get through it, and continue to get through it."

As they leave LSTC, they say they hope the seminary continues to proclaim the Gospel, defend the vulnerable, work against injustice, and form leaders in the church to do the same.

"The church can't afford to create leaders who hide and are afraid to confront the realities of our world," Maddie said, as both were visiting in Minnesota and actively protesting George Floyd's death. "The church needs leaders who aren't afraid to preach on the sin of racism. By creating leaders with courage, LSTC also has a huge role in creating support systems for leaders as well. We all know we can't do this alone; we need each other. LSTC helped teach me that, and my dream is that it keeps up that goal and shows the world just how a seminary can in fact do and say the hard thing without fear."

Q & A with PhD student Yasir Bilgin

Worldviews and framework not enough—serve community, improve lives

By Mark Swanson



Betul and Yasir Bilgin with their children Adil, Azra and Omer.

Yasir Bilgin, an LSTC 2020 PhD graduate, sat down in early June for a conversation with me. While a student at LSTC, Bilgin served as a member of the Re-Envisioning Team of A Center of Christian-Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice, as well as the graduate student representative of the LSTC Board of Directors from 2018–2019.

Alongside his wife Betul Bilgin, a clinical assistant professor in the Department of Chemical Engineering at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Bilgin was instrumental in facilitating important dialogue among Turkish scholars, Muslim and Christian community members, Hyde Park residents, and LSTC faculty, staff, and students in both formal and informal settings. In particular, the Bilgins organized iftar meals—that is, the breaking of the fast after sundown—for five years on Saturday evenings during Ramadan on the LSTC campus. He was the recipient of LSTC’s William J. and Elizabeth M. Danker Fellowship in 2014.

Prior to attending LSTC, Bilgin had rich experiences as both executive director and vice president for academic affairs for the Niagara Foundation in both Lansing, Mich., and Chicago. He also served as religious affairs coordinator and pastoral caregiver for the Northern Lights Society in Minnesota.

In Bilgin’s dissertation, *Islamic Spirituality, Cognitions and Coping: A Case Study of Risale-i Nur Collection*, he examines Islamic spiritual and cognitive perspectives in perceiving and coping with major life stressors, with a focus on the writings of the early 20th century theologian Bediuzzaman Said Nursi of Turkey.

Bilgin currently teaches Islamic studies courses at both the University of Chicago Graham School and the University of Illinois at Chicago. He and his family live in Hyde Park.

Mark Swanson: How was it that you ended up studying pastoral care in Christian seminaries?

Yasir Bilgin: I received a bachelor’s degree in Islamic Theology from Uludag University in Bursa, Turkey, in 1998. In 2001, I came to the United States for further studies in the area of counseling and religious studies within an interfaith context. While attending a program on Building Abrahamic Partnerships at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut, a friend of mine studying pastoral education and counseling at the seminary encouraged me to attend a seminary where I could combine psychology and counseling with religious studies.

In time, I enrolled in coursework at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., where I received a master of arts in Islamic Studies and a certification in Clinical Pastoral Education. Later, while teaching at Michigan State University and doing interfaith and ministerial service in Michigan, I continued to be interested in pursuing further educational opportunities. Dr. Swanson of LSTC and some Turkish LSTC students that I knew shared with me their positive experiences, which informed my move to Chicago with my family to study at LSTC.

MS: Describe an opportunity you had while at LSTC to shape and learn from the student experience.

YB: One of my experiences at LSTC was serving as the graduate student representative to the Board of Directors. The fact that Christian students chose a Muslim student for this opportunity says a lot about welcoming diverse perspectives. I believe many students come to LSTC from communities across the country and around the world with a receptive and curious mind; many of them have wide experiences, sometimes overseas.

This curiosity and intentionality enable them to discover rich scholarly resources and an interfaith environment here in Hyde Park. A lack of such a genuine curiosity may block our mental lenses to perceive these enormous resources and opportunities.

During my term on the board, I observed that LSTC, while staying loyal to the core mission of the institution, encourages this level of curiosity and invests in future interfaith and intercultural leaders, which, I believe, is necessary for today’s ministerial work.



One of the many celebrations CCME/LSTC has had with the Muslim community, this one during Ramadan (pre-pandemic). These gatherings are jointly planned and sponsored by CCME and the South Side Turkish community.

MS: You helped create a culture of exchange, both with the LSTC community and your own community living in Hyde Park and the larger Chicago area.

YB: I asked, “How can we come together to exchange ideas considering our commonalities and differences?” of my peers, other scholars from my community in nearby universities, and amongst families in Hyde Park and the extended Chicago community. Together, we created regular meetings at LSTC exchanging ideas and observations while appreciating the welcoming atmosphere. This was part of my learning experience. Hearing various perspectives and experiences helped me enrich my own understanding. Together, we continue to explore and discover common responses to big questions and challenges.

MS: How would you explain the topic of your dissertation briefly?

YB: I address the following types of questions through my dissertation:

- When we face big life challenges, how do faith and spiritual traditions provide us resources for our coping with those challenges?
- What sort of world views, embedded through those faith traditions, affect our coping process?
- What theories and perspectives do Muslim theologians (in particular, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi) provide to this type of conversation?
- How can we, as people of Muslim faith, study and apply those theories and resources in mental health settings, in mosques, and in the everyday lives of people of faith?

MS: You are intentional about how theories can be practically applied. You are creating tools to help people get through challenging life experiences.

YB: When we apply our basic understandings to societal challenges, we recognize our existing worldviews and frameworks aren’t enough. Further academic studies help us expand our mental frameworks and make more sense of challenges, especially when applying those theoretical lenses to daily practical problems.

When I study theories and big ideas of former scholars, I consider the community I serve and their needs. I ask myself how I can make abstract and challenging ideas perceivable and applicable to improve people’s lives and well-being.

MS: If you had to sum up your LSTC story in one sentence, what would that be?

YB: Considering the LSTC and larger Hyde Park community, academic support and diverse intercultural environment, I see my journey here at LSTC as eye-opening, humbling, enriching, and a life-changing experience.

Swanson is the Harold S. Vogelaar Professor of Christian-Muslim Studies and Interfaith Relations and Associate Director of the Center of Christian-Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice (CCME) at LSTC.

IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Faculty

Kurt K. Hendel, Bernard, Fisher, Westberg Distinguished Ministry Professor Emeritus of Reformation History, led adult forums at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Hinsdale, Ill., on “Faith Active in Love,” and “Martin Luther on the Christian Response to an Epidemic.”

He preached and prepared liturgies for the Ashburn Lutheran Church community

Eunyoung Lim, assistant professor of New Testament, published “Teaching ‘Greek for Ministry’ in a Multicultural Classroom” in *The Wabash Center Journal on Teaching* 1:2 (2020): 49–54.

Benjamin Stewart, Gordon A. Braatz Associate Professor of Worship and director of advanced studies, was part of the Robert C. Stuart Lecture Series at Christ Church Cathedral, Episcopal, in Houston, Texas. The lecture was “Our Return to the Earth — and the Life of the World to Come.” He also lectured for the Creation Care Community of the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island, N.Y., on “Baptism and Ecology.” He gave a presentation, “Online Worship during Quarantine,” at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Hinsdale, Ill. Earlier in 2020, Stewart: lectured on “Liturgy and Ecology” at the Lay School of Ministry, Northwest Synod of Wisconsin; spoke about “Climate, Theology, Liturgy” at the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island, Garden City, N.Y.; presented a paper, “Four (Re)Directions for Ecoliturgical reforms” at the North American Academy of Liturgy, Atlanta, Ga.

Mark Swanson, Harold A. Vogelaar Professor of Christian-Muslim Studies and Interfaith Relations, Chapter 4, published “Christians, Muslims and the True Religion” in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*. Volume 15, *Thematic Essays (600–1600)*, ed. Douglas Pratt and Charles Tieszen (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2020).

For the students:

A tribute to Patricia Bartley as she retires

By Jan Boden



Patricia Bartley

In March 1985, Patricia Bartley decided it was time to move on from her position as assistant registrar at Keller Graduate School of Management in Chicago. One Friday she answered an ad she saw in the Chicago Sun-Times for a secretarial position at a place called LSTC. The following Monday she received a call from the vice president for administration and finance.

“He asked if I could come in immediately for an interview,” Bartley recalled.

He told her that they had already completed the interview process and chosen someone else for the position but felt that he should at least have this last interview before contacting that person.

He asked her how she had heard about the position. She explained she responded to a want ad in the Chicago Sun-Times. He was surprised and told her the ad had been cancelled the prior week. Neither could explain it. He knew the current registrar had plans to retire within the next year and Bartley’s experience at Keller looked like a godsend to LSTC. It proved to be just that.

Bartley started at LSTC on April 10, 1985 and became registrar that November. On June 30, after 35 years serving LSTC and its students, Bartley retired.

Friend, advocate and guide

Bartley has loved serving LSTC students during her tenure as director of enrollment management/registrar.

“Beyond anything else, the highlight of my job has been serving the student body. It’s why I got up and came to work every day. I loved my job and it’s because of the students.”

The feeling was mutual. As word of her retirement spread, many students expressed to her that she couldn’t leave before they graduated. They knew she was a tireless advocate for them and her care and friendship guided many of them through their years at LSTC.

This year, because in-person graduation was cancelled and she couldn’t congratulate graduates face-to-face, Bartley wrote each one a note inside a card she had made just for them.

“When I thought about leaving the students, I’d get

wishy-washy about retiring,” she admitted. “But I completed all the documents to retire and I want to have time to do so many other things while I’m healthy and feeling good. I have invitations from all around the world from alumni and I hope to be able to visit some of them.”

West Africa is at the top of her list.

“I’ve been to East Africa and South Africa. Now I need to go to West Africa,” she said. Not by herself, though. Bartley envisions being a “kind of travel agent, making connections with those I know in Africa and once a year I’d like to take a small group of people there.”

The LSTC Gospel Choir

Bartley’s role as registrar and her love and advocacy for students secured her legacy at LSTC. She has contributed so much more than that.

In 1988 she and the late Irene Connor, who served as Advanced Studies assistant at LSTC for many years, put together a Martin Luther King Jr. Day Service. Three weeks before the service, a church Gospel choir that had agreed to sing cancelled. Unable to find a replacement choir, Bartley put a notice in everyone’s mailbox (this was before email) to see if anyone was interested in forming a choir.

“Approximately 50 people showed up—faculty, staff and students, representing King’s vision of what it looked like when people came together. Included in this group were students who would become the choir’s first musician and its first director,” Bartley said. “The choir was meant only for that one time but after that powerful service people gathered around to ask how they could join the Gospel Choir—and the rest is history!”



Bartley takes to the dance floor during a Gospel Choir concert.



Bartley at the 2019 Distinguished Service Award Dinner.

In the beginning years, the Gospel Choir held concerts in the spring and fall. Their reputation grew and they were invited to perform throughout the Midwest, at churches, synod assemblies and other gatherings. They travelled to Africa three times and even performed on the opening night on the main stage at the Chicago Gospel Music Fest in Grant Park.

Among the members the 1988 choir were the student founders of the Grover Wright Scholarship Fund. Years later, President James Kenneth Echols joined with the choir and established the Rev. Carole A. Burns Memorial Scholarship Fund, named for an extraordinary singer and founding member of the choir. Every Gospel Choir concert raises funds for these scholarships to support students of color who study at LSTC.

Bartley served as the Gospel Choir’s manager for most of its 32 years. To preserve the choir, she eventually relinquished this role to students. “I’m hoping to continue to sing with the choir in retirement,” she said.

Bringing anti-racism training to LSTC

Bartley leaves another legacy to LSTC: anti-racism training.

Shortly after she began working at the seminary, Bartley took an anti-racism training offered by Crossroads. At the time, LSTC would not pay for the training. For the first two years, she paid for it herself. To understand why, you need to know a bit of her struggle with racism.

Bartley’s family was the first Black family to buy a home in Chicago’s Englewood neighborhood in 1960. The night before they moved in, the house was set on fire, but her father moved the family in the next day as planned.

The story doesn’t end there, but she recalls that when she arrived at LSTC for her interview and discovered that LSTC stood for “Lutheran School of Theology”, she thought God must be playing a joke on her because it was the Lutheran community that had set her family’s house on fire. But she is not one to argue with God. For her, the anti-racism training with Crossroads was a godsend and a road to understanding and forgiveness.

After a bad racist incident happened on campus, it was Bartley’s recommendation to then-president William Leshar that brought the Crossroads training to LSTC.

“I’m proud of LSTC for celebrating Black history the entire month of February this year. That meant a lot to me,” Bartley said. “It only took 30 years after my initial participation in Crossroads training for that to happen—in my last year here. I look forward to it continuing and hope that the audience will evolve—that more of the white population on campus will participate.”



Bartley and Dean Esther Menn beam as they leave a commencement ceremony.

Family, fun and ministry

Although the decision to retire and leave her beloved students wasn’t an easy one, Bartley is looking forward to doing more of the things she enjoys outside of her work at LSTC: traveling, playing ping pong and having more time to devote to her ministry at her church.

“I have my first great grandson in Tennessee and I want to spend more time visiting grandkids and family.

Bartley is an avid ping pong player, newly endowed with a set of her own paddles and a belt with 10 balls, given to her by her next-door neighbor who is eager to have her join the community senior ping pong club. Over the years Bartley has, as often as she could, played ping pong with the international students in the Language Resource and Writing Center at LSTC.

“It’s a great stress breaker,” she said. “I’ll participate as much as possible when the virus passes and the world settles down.”

'Thanks, bishop.'

A gift officer reflects on a lifelong ministry and a pastor's legacy

By Tim Brown



Eugene Brodeen

"I'm here to see Eugene Brodeen," I said to the friendly attendant at the front desk as I removed my sunglasses. The sweltering sun was baking the Florida concrete outside, and the airconditioned lobby was a welcome escape.

"Ah, the pastor. Just a moment." She called up to his room, announcing my arrival. I wondered, in that brief moment, how she knew that I was a pastor. I was in my suit and tie carrying a briefcase, not in my clerical collar holding a communion kit. She hung up the phone, smiling. "The pastor will see you now. He's waiting."

"Oh, thank you," I said, laughing at my mistake. She wrote his door number on a slip of paper, handed me a visitor pass, and pointed toward the elevators.

When I arrived at Pastor Brodeen's apartment the door was already ajar. Just inside a tall man sitting in a wheelchair greeted me, framed in the background by shelves of books.

"Welcome! Let's get some coffee. It's on me," he said as he wheeled himself out. "If you would be so kind as to close the door behind me," his head motioned toward the now vacant room. "You have your keys, right?" I asked instinctively. He laughed. "No need," he said, "I know everyone here."

I closed the door and took my station at the back of his chair, pushing him toward the elevator. About that time his neighbor came out to slowly join our journey to the lobby. They chatted easily with one another as if they hadn't spoken in a good long while, though Eugene would tell me later that they'd had breakfast together in the dining hall earlier. "Every conversation is new at our age," he said frankly.

We made our way to the small café at the retirement center, the only patrons at that time of the afternoon. "It's on me," he reminded me, and then smirked, whispering, "because it's free." I smiled.

We grabbed coffee and some cream packets and sat down at a table, the TV above our heads flashing pictures on mute. The conversation came easy, as he started in with the questioning, or should I say, "friendly interrogation."

Where was I from, originally? When had I started working for the seminary? How long had I been in the parish, and what prompted my move? In my work as a gifts officer and mission ambassador, I was more used to asking the questions. But this was old hat for the pastor across from me. Pastors make a living by being inquisitive, and even into his 90s he still had the gift.

After lobbing a set of questions, one after the other at me, he said, "Did you know that I was the youngest bishop in the LCA [Lutheran Church in America] to be elected at that time?" "I did not," I confessed. I hadn't even known he had been a bishop. "I was," he smiled, "of New England. I met the Dalai Lama in my time as bishop, as well as the Royal Family. They were very kind, but very formal."

"I also met Dietrich Bonhoeffer's best friend. Some say they were lovers, you know." His eyes sparkled at the idea of such a scandal. I nodded, having heard that. "I read it in a biography on him. I still read two books a week or so."

The conversation then moved into how he had a heart for seminary students, and how he felt it was paramount that they came out of seminary possessing the people skills necessary for making connections in the parish. The ability to connect with the person across from you was just as important as the ability to connect theological concepts together for him. "We cannot be all about theory," he noted, "we must be about practice." With this he put his fist down on the armrest of his chair, much as a convicted theologian would.

I thanked him for remembering the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago in his estate plans, a generous gift that would be used to teach these seminarians he had such a heart for the social skills, as well as the theological acumen, needed for parish ministry.

As our cups ran dry, he reminded me of his book study happening soon, and I wheeled him back toward the lobby. "No need to take me up to the apartment," he said. "I'll wait here for my group. As I do, I pray for everyone who passes by here. Once a pastor, always a pastor," he said, smiling. I nodded, thanked him for a lovely visit, and said I looked forward to the next time.

As I left, I watched him sit there, hands folded across his lap, silently watching people pass through the lobby, his lips moving in hushed prayer. And in that moment I thanked God for him, too, and his lifelong ministry, and for his enduring legacy.

Thanks, Bishop.

Brown is an LSTC gift officer and mission ambassador, and visited with Eugene Brodeen last fall. Brodeen died in early April (see page 24).

Pillar Society:

Giving thanks for essential support



What would you call someone who cares so much about preparing future leaders that they continue to support LSTC long after their life? LSTC calls them a pillar and has established the Pillar Society to recognize and thank them.

“It’s impossible to overestimate the importance of planned gifts to LSTC,” said Bill Myatt, director of philanthropic engagement. “Or to overestimate our gratitude for the people who include LSTC in their estate plans.”

The Pillar Society was started several years ago by Keith Nelson (1970, MDiv) who was working part-time in LSTC’s Advancement Office on major and planned gifts. He noticed that the seminary didn’t have a special way to thank those who had made planned (also called legacy) gifts, so he created the Pillar Society.

Since then, LSTC has been identifying those who have made planned gifts, to thank them. The Advancement team also invites others who care about LSTC and the future of the church to join the Pillar Society.

“If it’s just about money, we’ve missed the point”

For Nelson giving, especially legacy giving, is about “what brings joy to your heart.”

“It’s not about how much wealth a person has. It’s about what is meaningful to them and what they care about. If it’s just about money, we’ve missed the point,” he said.

Nelson had a long career with Lutheran Planned Giving Services (now Lutheran Giving) in Nebraska before bringing that experience to LSTC’s Advancement staff.

“There are hundreds of people I’ve worked with who took great joy, even to the point of tears, to know that their gift would be given to something important to them when they no longer needed that money,” Nelson said.

Why pillars?

In the summer of 1967, Nelson and several other students moved to the not-quite-finished new LSTC campus. LSTC put them to work moving furniture and books into the building at 55th and University.

The distinctive architecture of the building intrigued Nelson. It rests on 12 concrete pillars. For over 50 years, those pillars have never faltered.

For Nelson, the strength and stability of those pillars was the ideal symbol for those who offer the same to LSTC through planned gifts. Those donors are “pillars” of the seminary. The future funding of LSTC’s mission rests on their gifts.

“I don’t care how much money you have,” Nelson said. “The purpose of the Pillar Society is to let everyone see that we are the support, we are capable of insuring a strong foundation and future for the work that the church has called the seminary to accomplish.”

“Just take a little time to learn about the options that are there to find joy in making a gift to something you care about: your love for the Lord, the church, LSTC; to see

that to people, young and not so young, will be able to proclaim the good news of God’s love in Jesus Christ—to have a seminary that is committed to inclusiveness, justice, welcome, and good news.”

Alumni support students present and future



Elaine Siemsen

Other alumni understand the impact their gift has on the future of LSTC. Alumni Board member Elaine Siemsen (1984, MDiv; 1996, ThM; 2000, PhD) has remarked that each time she returns to LSTC and climbs the main stairs, she is “accompanied by the ghosts of my passage through LSTC.” The ghosts include all those whose past gifts made her LSTC education possible.

At a Homecoming 2019 reception she introduced the Pillar Society to alumni and friends. Siemsen used Joseph Sittler’s construction of recollection, reconstruction and cosmic extension to describe what happens when she and other alumni give to LSTC.

“Recollection: When we give a gift to LSTC, we take that first step: recollecting our experiences and moments of learning, the challenges to our comfortable places, the affirmation of our gifts.

“Reconstruction: When we give a gift to LSTC, we move into that second step of reconstruction. We return to our places in the world with renewed energy to act upon the questions: where is creativity flowing, where is the gospel growing, where am I expanding? what I can be in God’s creation? As we face the creative challenges of our own world, the Gospel works through each of us to transform the cosmos; all of God’s creation.

“When we give to LSTC, we help to propel the work of the Gospel into the **cosmic extension** of the theology of Joseph Sittler. We become a part of the Gospel that welcomes all people, in all circumstances, in all identities and we do so in the context of a cosmic savior.”

She urged those gathered to “Take a risk, pragmatically hopeful, believing that your journey of recollection, reconstruction and cosmic extension contribute to the work of LSTC and the proclamation of the gospel in lives here today. One day, someone else will climb those stairs and we will be the ghosts to whom they say thank you.”

To tell us about a planned gift you have established for LSTC or to find out more about how to make one, please fill out and return the form attached to the envelope in this issue. You may also contact Bill Myatt at William.myatt@lstc.edu or 773.383.4997.

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 using the response card provided in this Epistle.

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We give thanks for the lives and vision of those Pillar Society members who died during the last year, or whose bequest was realized in the last year. Their generosity lives on in support of our mission.

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 Mr. Harold Wimmert† & Mrs. Delores Wimmert

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CLASS NOTES

1982

Jerry Koch (MDiv) was inducted into membership in the Texas Tech University Teaching Academy. Academy members are recognized as excellent instructors; they also serve as resource persons, peer reviewers and mentors for the entire teaching faculty and their students. He has taught at Texas Tech since 1994 and is Professor of Sociology.

1983

Judith Wascher(Christ Semianry–Seminex, MDiv) (graduated as Judith Wilt) is moving toward retirement after serving as interim for 30 congregations, most recently in southwestern Wyoming. She hopes to continue working “some,” and is living in an active senior community in Omaha, Neb.

1985

Robert Mursch (DMin) was elected to the board of Village on the Isle, a continuing care retirement community in Venice, Fla.

1987

Jane Kunzier–Brunner (MDiv; 2001, DMin) graduated from Valparaiso University law School with a Juris Doctor. She intends to use the law degree to serve the church.

1989

Paul Erickson (MDiv), bishop of the Greater Milwaukee Synod, is pictured in the May *Living Lutheran* accompanying the article “Sacred hospitality: What does it mean to be a sanctuary denomination?”

Robert Tuttle (MA) published the column “The perils of relying on the wrong clause—grounding the ministerial exception at the Supreme Court” in the March 18

Verdict: *Legal Analysis and Commentary*, published by Justia. He is the David R. and Sherry Kirschner Berz Research Professor of Law and Religion at the George Washington University Law School, where he has taught since 1994, as well as Professor of Religion in the University’s Columbian College of Arts & Sciences.

1990

Chris Repp (MDiv) was featured in the April 16 article “When Faith Speaks in the Age of Coronavirus: Pastor Valena Clairborne and Pastor Chris Repp” in *Smilepolitely.com*, a Champaign–Urbana, Ill., online culture magazine.

1994

D. Jensen Seyenkulo (ThM; 1999, PhD) published the article “Lutheran Church in Liberia to continue ‘nonphysical contact’ services” on May 15 in the Liberian newspaper, *Front Page Africa*.

1999

Mark Wicksrom (DMin) retired in June 2019, having spent the last 14 years of ministry as senior pastor of Community Lutheran Church in Las Vegas, Nev. In recent years, he published three books, *The Gospel of Grace*, *Sensible Grace* and *Living in Grace*.

2002

Carmelo Santos–Rolon (MDiv; 2004, ThM; 2010, PhD) offered words of solidarity on behalf of the Latino Ministries Association during the ELCA’s June 17 online Commemoration of the Emanuel Nine. He serves as director, theological diversity and engagement, ELCA.

2003

Robin Brown (MDiv; 2010, DMin) preached for the ELCA’s

weekly online worship on July 1. On July 7, she presented a Summer Ministry Conversation webinar for the Northern Illinois Synod. She was one of three women invited to share their journey to ministry and their current work.

Cheryl Stewart Pero (ThM; 2010, PhD) published “We are church, we are called: A “maverick” for the church” in the April *Living Lutheran*. Pero reflects on the 30th anniversary of her ordination as one of the first black women pastors in the Lutheran church. On May 18, more than 30 friends and family from around the world gathered by Zoom for a surprise anniversary party for Pero on the date of her ordination. The party was organized by Joy Heine (2003, MAM; 2017, MDiv) and Anna Ernst (2017, MDiv), two of the many students Pero mentored at LSTC.

2007

Joel Cruz (ThM; 2009, PhD) published the chapter “Mainline Protestantism in Latin America” in the Oxford Handbook of Latin American Christianity (2020, Oxford University Press).

2008

Paul Bailie (MDiv) and Brandi Hacker (MDiv) welcomed their son, James Ryan, on April 27.

Peter Hinrich (MDiv) earned the Doctor of Ministry degree from Trinity Theological Seminary in May. His professional paper presented via a Zoom session was “Life in Abundance: The Journey into Retirement and Beyond.”

Christie Manisto (MDiv) is the ELCA global mission pastor of St. Andrews United Church of Cairo in Cairo, Egypt. Her husband Steve Saari is a special education

teacher and works for the St. Andrews Refugee Service (STARS) coordinating special education services. They talk about their ministry in a video posted on YouTube for the May ELCA Global Links.

2009

Angela Khabebe (MDiv) was featured in the June 3 Christian Century article, “Being church while neighborhood burns?” and published the reflection “Holy trinity, holy mystery” in the June/July *Living Lutheran*.

2015

Kwame Pitts (MDiv) published “Venerating our ancestors,” the Deeper Understanding in the June/July *Living Lutheran*. She offered the reflection for the ELCA’s June 17 online Commemoration of the Emanuel Nine.

2016

Crystal Silva McCormick (ThM) published “Church, this isn’t about our religious freedom” in the April 21 issue of *Relevant* magazine found online at relevantmagazine.com.

2017

Tobita (Toby) Chow (MDiv) was a speaker for the May 21 Institute for Policy Studies Global Dialogue for Systemic Change, “Hot & Cold Wares: Militarism & the Pandemic” held online.

2018

Hassan Aly (ThM) was featured on March 6 in a *Chicago Tribune/Pioneer Press Q & A*, “Shout Out: Sheikh Hassan Aly, imam of the Mecca Center in Willowbrook.”

Fatima Bass Thomas (MA), director of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in The

Gambia women's ministry is quoted and pictured in the May *Living Lutheran* article, "A helpful harvest: With church support women in Gambia turn cashews into steady income." The programs Bass Thomas and the ELCTG support empower women by providing them with a stable income to support their families.

Rita Chirala William (MDiv) was ordained March 21 in the Augustana Chapel at LSTC. She is serving as pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Sault St. Marie, Mich. Pastors Tom Terrell (1987, MDiv) and Nancy Goede (1994, MDiv) participated in the service.

2020

Makayla Dahleen (MDiv) was quoted in the April 30 *Chicago Tribune* article, "Corona pandemic leaves Chicago-area seminarians waiting to fulfill dream of becoming priests, ministers."

Danielle "Elle" Dowd (MDiv) was a leader of the litany during the ELCA's June 17 online Commemoration

of the Emanuel Nine. She also offered words of solidarity on behalf of the European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice.

David Rebey (MDiv) was quoted in the April 30 *Chicago Tribune* article, "Corona pandemic leaves Chicago-area seminarians waiting to fulfill dream of becoming priests, ministers."



Jessica Dowd handwrites scripture as part of the Chicago Illuminated Scripture Project.

Chicago Illuminated Scripture Project

In mid-May, four LSTC alumni in the Metropolitan Chicago Synod launched the Chicago Illuminated Scripture Project (CISP). Erin Coleman Branchaud (2018, MDiv), Fanya Burford-Berry (2018, MDiv), Adam Dowd (2020, MDiv) and Tom Gaulke (2008, MDiv; 2017, ThM; 2020, PhD) invited anyone living in the Metro Chicago area to hand copy a chapter of a biblical book.

Coleman Branchaud explains in a video on the CISP homepage that the chapters will be gathered into a community Bible, capturing what life is like during this time of pandemic.

Participants were invited to sign up for the available chapter of their choice from the four gospels

and the Book of Acts. Several weeks into the project, the team added Genesis and Exodus to the list. Instructions included using white 8.5 x 11-inch paper with the standard margins drawn for each page. When completed, the pages could be scanned to be sent electronically or mailed flat.

Handwriting, illuminating and even commenting on scripture in this way is a form of meditation and a way to deeply engage with the text.

The project is based on similar projects, the Nebraska Corona Bible and the St. Gallen Coronabibel in Northeast Switzerland.

Gene V. Anderson
1946-2020
Class of 1991, DMin

Anderson died March 16 and a funeral was held for immediate family because of Covid-19. A community memorial service will be held at a later date at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Indianola, Iowa, where he served 26 years.

He was born in Benson, Minn., and always felt close to farm life and his ancestral Norwegian roots.

A life-long learner, he earned his DMin in pastoral care and counseling from LSTC in 1991. He served congregations in South Dakota and Iowa.

Anderson learned Spanish as an adult in recent years as a volunteer teacher at an English Language Learner school. Just last year he worked with a border immersion program to learn more about the plight of immigrants.

He is survived by his wife Lynette, a son and a daughter, and three grandchildren.

Marbury Anderson
1923-2020
Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1948

Anderson was born in Ogilvie, Minn., and died April 14 in Bonita Springs, Fla. He graduated from Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minn. He was ordained and married Sylvia Anderson the same day—June 13, 1948. Known for his inspiring preaching, he

served parishes in Wyoming, Texas, Minnesota and Colorado. He retired in 1991 but continued to serve as interim pastor in three congregations.

He is survived by his wife Sylvia, his son and daughter, five grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren. A son preceded him in death.

Memorial services will be held in Naples, Fla., when it is safe to gather as a community.

Eugene Brodeen
1928-2020
Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1954

Eugene Brodeen was ordained in 1954 and served congregations in New York and New England for 16 years. He served on boards of many local and national organizations including the National Lutheran Office for Research and Planning, Rotary, YMCA, Eger Health Care Center and Foundation (NYC) and Salvation Army

Brodeen was active in ecumenical and pan-Lutheran efforts, pioneering Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue and chairing the New England Council of Catholic and Protestant Bishops. In 1970 he was elected bishop of the New England Synod of the Lutheran Church in America and served three terms. He retired in 1992 to Florida. He and his wife traveled to all seven continents and continued informal ministry at the Regency Oaks Living Center.

Brodeen died in April, and was preceded in death

by his wife Elizabeth. He is survived by their four children and five grandchildren.

Read a remembrance of Bishop Brodeen by Tim Brown on page XX.

Mary Brown
1939-2020
Class of 2006

A lifelong learner, Brown attained a doctoral degree in nursing and her MDiv while maintaining her status as a registered nurse. She worked as a nurse in California, Washington, D.C., and Virginia before transitioning to teaching nursing at the college level, which culminated at Milwaukee (Wis.) School of Engineering, where she was founding dean of the school of nursing from 1995-2004. She established Shenandoah County Health Ministries Coalition to bring faith community nursing to small parishes in Shenandoah County. It was a blend of her two callings: nursing and ministry.

Brown was born in Philadelphia, Pa., and received degrees from the University of Maryland, Catholic University of America, University of Pittsburgh and LSTC. Brown was ordained in 2006 and served St. Luke Lutheran Church, Woodstock, Va., until her retirement in 2014.

She is survived by three sons, 10 grandchildren and one great granddaughter. A memorial service was tentatively planned for June in Luray, Va.

LeRoy Erlandson
Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1959

A pastor for nearly 60 years, LeRoy Erlandson was a graduate of Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minn., and served parishes in Minnesota, North Dakota and Texas.

He spent the last 12 years of ministry as protestant chaplain at the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis. He died April 5 and is survived by his wife Charlotte, their six children and 10 grandchildren. A funeral will be held later at Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Minneapolis.

R. Howard Fehr
1928-2020
Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1954

R. Howard Fehr, Eau Claire, Wis., died Feb. 27. A funeral service was held at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Eau Claire on March 7.

He served eight parishes in Michigan and Wisconsin. Following his retirement he served as a visitation pastor in Eau Claire.

Fehr loved music and played his violin throughout his life; he sang in several barbershop quartets and church choirs.

He is survived by six children, 11 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife Doris (Olson), who died in 2019, as well as a grandson.

Andrew Ansel Hanson
1920 -2020
Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1946

Ordained in 1946, Andrew Hanson served six congregations in Minnesota during his 39 years of ministry. In retirement he served another 12 years at American Lutheran Church in Long Prairie, Minn. From 1949 to 1959 he was a World Mission Prayer League board member, traveling to Mexico in 1951.

He died April 22 at the age of 99. He was preceded in death by his wife Helen. He is survived by four children, nine children and nine great-grandchildren. A funeral service will take place at a later date.

Leonard N. Johnson
1936-2020
Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1962

During his 55 years of parish ministry, Leonard Johnson served parishes across the U.S. He was involved in the communities he served as a youth football coach, chaplain to various fire companies, and as chairman of the New York State Blind Association. He co-authored a children's coloring book, Mike & Molly, and was an avid golfer.

He died Jan. 31; his wife of 60 years, Joyce, was by his side. He was predeceased by a son and is also survived by three children, 11 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. A funeral was held Feb. 4 at Luther Memorial Church in North Syracuse, N.Y.

Virgil Juliot
1925-2020
Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1954

Virgil Juliot enlisted in the Army Air Corps the day before his 18th birthday and served as a navigator aboard a B29 Bomber, flying various missions over Japan during WWII.

He married Marilyn Culver in 1955, and they had five children. In addition to his wife and children, he is survived by 12 grandchildren and 24 great-grandchildren.

A private graveside service was held in April in East Moline, Ill. with a celebration of life to be held at a later date.

He served parishes in Washington, Minnesota and Illinois before retiring in 1992 and moving to Geneseo, Ill.

He and his wife Marilyn were members of First Lutheran in Geneseo. He loved tending his landscaping and graduated from the Illinois Master Gardeners course in 1996.

Juliot served on the American Missions committee of the Minnesota Synod (LCA) and on the Migrant Worker Consortium of the Illinois Conference of Churches.

James Sabin Kratz
1935-2020
Class of 1978 (DMin)

Kratz served parishes in Missouri, California and Iowa and served as associate regional minister of the Upper Midwest 1986-1996. He died Feb 28 and a funeral was March 7 at West Des Moines Christian Church. He is Survived by

his wife Pat, three sons, eight grandchildren, five step-grandchildren, two great-grandchildren and one step-grandchild.

Michael N. May
1945-2020
Concordia Theological Seminary Class of 1971

May, Kansas City, Kan, died unexpectedly on May 27. He is survived by his wife Judy, three sons, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Services were private, due to Covid 19, but a larger memorial service is planned.

During served his entire ministry at St Luke's Lutheran Church in Kansas City, and even met his wife there while a vicar. He was adamant about serving the needs of the underserved in Kansas City. He was volunteer chaplain with the police, fire and sheriff departments, and was one of the founders of the chaplain's program, serving as such for 40 years. In March 2020, Mayor David Alvey bestowed on May the honorary title of Chaplain Emeritus, and proclaimed March 1, 2020, as "Chaplain Mike May Day."

Robert (Bob) Charles Morland
1937-2020
Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1963

Robert (Bob) Charles Morland, Calgary, Alberta, died March 27. He served parishes in Southern Minnesota, Winnipeg, Yukon Territory and Calgary, retiring in 2000.

Gordon A. Roesch
1942-2020
Class of 1968

Gordon A. Roesch, 77, died Feb. 21 in Olathe, Kan., following a brief illness and Alzheimer's. He was born Aug 6, 1942, in Erie, Pa., and in 1961 met Erma Sue Benson of Minnesota when they both volunteered at a youth summer program in Jersey City. They married in 1964.

He graduated from Thiel College in 1964 and was ordained in 1968. He later received his DMin from Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University.

He served five congregations in Texas. He is survived by his wife Erma Sue and three children, four grandchildren and a great granddaughter. A memorial service in Kansas will be planned in the near future.

Harold Skinner
1927-2020
Class of 1956

Before he graduated high school, Harold Skinner had earned his pilot's license. He served in the U.S. Army Air Force from 1946 to 1948. After graduating from Lenior-Rhyne College, Hickory, N.C., he attended seminary and was ordained in 1956.

Skinner served parishes in New Mexico, Wyoming, Colorado, South Carolina and North Carolina. He also was the first manager of Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp in Hillside, Colo., from 1958 to 1962.

He served the church as a delegate and in leadership positions at

WE REMEMBER

conference, district, synod and churchwide levels. He organized high school backpacking trips on the Appalachian Trail through Camp Lutheridge from 1971 to 1979. He continued hiking with his fellow pastors for 48 years.

He and his wife Nancy retired to Hickory, N.C., and were active supporters of Lenoir-Rhyne College, serving in its Alumni Association. They were both conferred the Trustee Award of Lenoir-Rhyne.

They traveled the world as members of the Airstream Caravan Club. He

served as president of the Piedmont North Carolina unit, was Region 3 chaplain and was a devotional leader at the International Airstream Rally.

Skinner died May 8. He is survived by his wife of 66 years, a daughter and two sons. A celebration of his life will occur at a future date.

Erwin M. Smuda **Concordia Seminary**

Erwin M. Smuda died on May 24 after battling ALS the past three years. He was born in Faribault, Minn., and after receiving an MA

in Education, he served as a teacher, youth advisor and director of education in several Lutheran congregations in the Chicago area. After receiving his MDiv, he served parishes in Minnesota and Ohio. He received his DMin in liturgical studies at LSTC.

He wrote articles for the *Journal of Lutheran Education*, *Currents in Theology and Mission*, professional and devotional materials for Augsburg Fortress Publishers, and a publication on worship for the *Northeastern Ohio Synod*. In retirement he served

parishes in Ohio, including five Episcopal congregations.

He is survived by his wife Jan, two children and four grandchildren.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, a memorial service will be held at a later date.

WE REMEMBER

Margaret D. Carlson

Margaret D. Carlson, a friend and generous donor to LSTC, died May 28.

A funeral was held June 6 at Memorial Park Cemetery in Skokie, Ill., with Kim Beckmann (1984, MDiv; 1999, DMin) preaching and presiding.

Born in 1921, Carlson had a deep and quiet faith. She had a love of literature and poetry. At nearly 100 years of age, her mind remained sharp even as her body wearied. In her last days, she and her family were reading the classics, connecting via technology.

She was a member of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Evanston, Ill. She was preceded in death by her husband, LeRoy. She is survived by their children, Ted, Prudence, Walter, and Letitia and their spouses and children.

In 2009, she and LeRoy received the Distinguished Service Award from LSTC. In 1996 they established the Axel Jacob and Gerda Maria (Swanson) Carlson Chair in Homiletics. The chair has been occupied by Richard Jensen, Craig A. Satterlee and Kimberly Wagner.

In 2007 they established the James Kenneth Echols Prize for Excellence in Preaching. The prize has been given each year since 2008.

LeRoy Carlson established Telephone and Data Systems, Inc. (TDS) with a vision for the role digital data would have in telecommunications. U.S. Cellular is the wireless subsidiary of TDS.

Marjorie Thiel **1933-2020**

Generosity was a hallmark of Marjorie Thiel's life. For more than 30 years, she and her husband, Wilbert ("Bill"), supported LSTC through gifts to the annual fund, to its comprehensive campaigns, for student scholarships and special programs. They also supported St. Matthew's Lutheran Home, part of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois.

In 2010, the Thiels received the Distinguished Service Award from LSTC for their commitment to preparing outstanding pastors for parish ministry.

Marjorie died March 30. A private interment took place in April. Service arrangements are pending. She is survived by her husband, their three children and four grandchildren.

Board of Directors

With thanks for their service:

Jessica Liles and Brian Lund will conclude their service on the Board of Directors Oct. 1. Liles represented the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod and Lund represented the Nebraska Synod.

Liles joined the board in 2014 and served on the Academic Affairs and Board Development Committees during her two terms. She is the faith formation and education director at The Neighborhood Church in Bentonville, Ark.

Lund joined the board in 2017 and served on the Administration and Finance Committee (now called Finance and Operations). He was a senior systems administrator for ConAgra Foods before he retired. In addition to being very involved in church activities as a volunteer leader, teacher and choir member, he plays trombone in a community band. His daughter, Rebecca and son-in-law, Richard Sheridan both earned their MDiv degrees from LSTC in 2011.

New leadership

Beginning Oct. 1 Kristi Ferguson will become the chairperson on the board and Terry Goff will become vice chairperson. Ferguson has served on the board for five years and has been involved in strategic planning and oversight of the plan. She also serves on the academics and community committee.

Godspeed

Devan Wasz in May resigned from her position as pastry chef and administrative manager for the Refectory.

Anna Moorhead left her role as a major gift officer, effective June 26. Moorhead joined the Advancement staff in February 2019.

Jason McGovern, web manager since 2017 and web and media manager from June 2014 to March 2017, concluded his time with LSTC on June 30. He led the redesign of the seminary website in 2016 and did many deep dives to research and solve web technical problems.

In addition to McGovern, these positions were also eliminated and announced in June:

Kim Ferguson, front desk receptionist, started her ministry at LSTC in the fall of 2000. Throughout her time at the school she has held multiple roles, each of which has utilized her gifts of hospitality, tenacity and strong sense of call to intercultural bridge building, for which we remain grateful.

Jennifer Thomas (1998, MDiv), alumni and church engagement manager, served on the advancement team for the past 5½ years. Her dedicated work in major gifts and alumni/church engagement will be missed.

Ryan Fordice, who joined the advancement team in October 2015, brought a comprehensive, thoughtful

approach to his most recent role as donor relations manager.

Another staff change as of July 1 is *Bob Berridge* shifting from the discontinued position of vice president for operations to a new role as director of facility services. We are grateful for Bob's impact thus far and look forward to his engagement in this new role.

Accomplishments

Aaron Copley-Spivey selected for Emerging CUPA-HR Leaders Program

Aaron Copley-Spivey, director of human resources and Title IX coordinator, is one of seven College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) members who have been selected to participate in the 2020-21 Emerging CUPA-HR Leaders program.

The year-long program recognizes volunteer leaders from across the country who have demonstrated

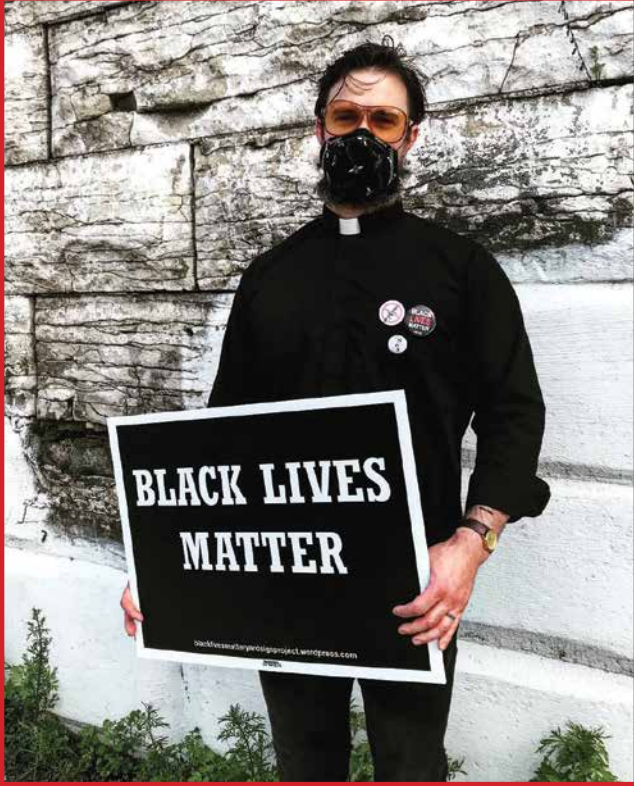
exemplary leadership and initiative within higher ed HR and desire to play an active role in advancing the profession.

Copley-Spivey will participate in the Association Leadership Program (ALP) in July, attend CUPA-HR's annual conference in the fall, engage in a CUPA-HR leadership project/experience during the fiscal year and, to the degree possible, participate in CUPA-HR activities at the national, regional or chapter level.

Julie Sevig, content and social media manager, contributed to two resources recently published by Augsburg Fortress. She wrote the biography of Daniel Erlander found at the beginning of the "remake" of his classic resource, "Baptized, We Live: A Congregational Guide to Lutheranism as a Way of Life." She also wrote 16 weeks of the "Let the Children Come" segment included in the *Sundays and Seasons* worship resource (Year B, 2021).



In June 2019, the LSTC community gathered to honor Elmer Henderson, watchperson coordinator, and Mitch McCullough, watchperson, when they retired after 42 combined years of service to LSTC. Henderson (at the microphone), who served LSTC from 2000 to 2019, died unexpectedly in June. He and McCullough were South Side boyhood friends.



Adam Dowd (MDiv 2020) is one of many in the LSTC community, current and graduates, who have engaged in #blacklivesmatter protests, especially since the death of George Floyd.



Renee Fisher was one of Refectory team which served 500 tacos and 75 bags of tortilla chips and salsa in just two hours at the Harold Washington Library for Juneteenth.



President James Nieman prepares for Commencement recording.



Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the July 2 ordination of Joshua Menke was different, but also far-reaching. Only two others were physically present with Menke—his bishop, Erik K. J. Gronberg, and his partner, Sarah Derrick (MDiv 2019). But, he was surrounded via Zoom and Facebook Livestream by the Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod by friends and family from across the globe, including musicians from Geneva, Switzerland, where he did his internship. Photo by Lucy B. Photography



LSTC faculty and staff share the peace via Zoom. Throughout Covid, they've gathered this way for meetings, worship and staff farewells.

Gather from a distance: Homecoming 2020

Wherever you are, you can be part of Homecoming 2020 this year because the core of the celebration will be online. Join the celebrations, reunions, learning opportunities and surprises Oct. 14–15.

The two days will include options for being part of LSTC online classes, workshops with faculty, worship, catching up with classmates through pre-recorded “notes” and live sessions and the Distinguished Alumni Award celebration.

“Gathering this way opens up all kinds of possibilities,” Houston said. “People who wouldn’t be able to come to Chicago can participate. We want to offer sessions that are useful and inspiring.” Homecoming will honor the 50-year grads from 1970 as well as the classes of 1995, 2000, 2010 and 2020.

Reserve the dates in your calendar and watch for more information in upcoming *E.pistles* and on lstc.edu/news-events/events.

Scherer Lecture is online Sept. 29

The 2020 Scherer Lecture featuring Al Tizon will be held Tuesday, Sept. 29, at 4 p.m. as a webinar on Zoom and Facebook Live.

Tizon is executive minister of Serve Globally, the international ministries arm of the Evangelical Covenant Church. He oversees 125 missionaries and six ministries serving in over 50 countries. He is also an affiliate professor at North Park Theological Seminary.

World Mission Institute March 11

The World Mission Institute will be held March 11, 2021. The speaker is Peter Phan on the theme “Migration, Mission and Spirituality.” Phan is the Ignacio Ellacuria S. J., chair of Catholic Social Thought, Georgetown University Washington, D.C. The format for the World Mission Institute will be announced in February 2021.

Fall classes offered online, in person

In early June, the LSTC executive cabinet confirmed a faculty decision made in April because of the pandemic—that all Fall classes will be offered online, but also in person to the extent that they can (following guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control, the governor and mayor).

There will be no change to the academic calendar, with a regular 15-week semester (12 for instruction).

Although the class list is not finalized, it will continually be upgraded over the summer at lstc.edu (under Students). Esther Menn, Dean of Academic Affairs, said a final decision will be made by Aug. 17 regarding details about all classes, including which ones will be offered in person.

More than 20 classes will be offered online this fall, more than seven times what the seminary normally offers each semester, Menn said. The effort has meant rewiring and refiguring classrooms, moving to a new learning management system, Brightspace, faculty training, and hiring an educational technologist.

Eric Kyle, associate professor and director of contextual education, has been named online program and faculty development coordination.

Values that guided the decision are: **reliability** (a commitment to offer classes); **safety** (online option for those who don’t feel safe in class; classrooms reconfigured for physical distancing); **flexibility** (responsive to science-based guidelines); **accessibility** (meeting the needs of those who want both online and in person classes); **quality** (committed to quality courses whatever the distribution method, making necessary technology and training available); **community** (commitment to forming community both in person and online); and attention to **diversity, equity and inclusion** (including readings and perspectives from a variety of contexts).

Your help needed—take the LSTC Epistle reader survey

We appreciate the comments and feedback you send us about the LSTC Epistle magazine. We want to know more from more of you, our readers.

What sections and articles do you read? Which ones don’t you read? Does it come often enough or too often? Would you prefer to receive it electronically?

Please take a few minutes to take a brief online reader survey at:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LSTC_Epistle_magazine

We will use your feedback in the next issue. **Thank you!**



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SUMMER 2020

Refectory team members pause for a photo on Juneteenth.