

Launching
LSTC's strategic plan

From pastoring
to politics

Manna and mercy:
Dan Erlander's drawings



epistle

WINTER/
SPRING 2021

The magazine of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

21st century missionaries

Four LSTC grads say their education
prepared them for calls abroad



It's about time...

For the first time with this issue of the *Epistle*, and many times more over the next three years, you will learn about our new strategic plan. It's about time. That sounds impatient. What I really mean is that at heart this new plan is about being timely, about engaging the times in which we now live. Entitled "For such a time as this" (Esther 4:14), this plan is our school's alert proposal about preparing faithful leaders for times of ambiguity, instability, and change. We could have acted differently. In light of the many challenges now facing seminaries, ministry, and our church, we could have adopted avoidance or denial. The result then would have been quite certain. It would mean our school's demise.

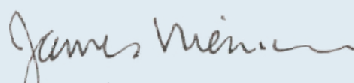
Instead, we embarked on the more difficult path of planning, recognizing what must be urgently addressed and changing course to reach that goal. Attuned to God's will, aligned with our mission, and aware of many gifts, this plan names a future for our school that we pray best serves the gospel, and urges us to commit to that future with all our strength, persistence, and resolve. In short, it is about hard work for serious change. We all know of strategic plans that settle for less, tinkering with minor adjustments to how things have always been or gesturing to vague aspirations both ungrounded and unlikely. Not so for this new plan. Everything is now in play because our future requires boldness.

So what is this future we seek? During January, there was an orientation for the "owners" who will guide several high-priority initiatives during this calendar year. In such a role, it's easy to be overwhelmed by the breadth and depth of a plan that touches nearly every part of the school, and daunted by responsibility for the many tasks yet to be done. Rather than getting lost in the weeds of the plan, though, I asked the owners to step back and imagine the future to which all the plan's initiatives would lead. Detailed timelines are surely

how a strategic plan unfolds but they are not its ultimate purpose. So again, what is this future we seek? It comes down to three major changes by the end of 2023.

- The first pertains to our **character**. Despite best intentions, our school is demographically more like the ELCA than our wider society. We need to transform this now so authentic diversity with equity and inclusion becomes our realized goal and gift for the church. And this means confronting our history of racism and white supremacy.
- The next involves greater **access**. The pandemic rapidly taught how to share our insights beyond in-person means. We want this to continue further still, with learning available more widely due to technology, scholarships, and more. And this access should be a two-way street where the wisdom of others also transforms our work.
- The last is about being **sustainable**. Many treasured educational forms and facilities now burden our mission. We must discern adaptive models, structures, and resources that can best support emerging ways of shaping people for ministry in the coming years. And this will surely require difficult choices about what to retain or rethink.

Over the next three years, we want to work toward a future where we can fully be who we say we are, share those gifts with more kinds of learners, and do this without exhaustion. It's a future we have explored across many different groups during the past fifteen months through reading, interviews, reflection, meetings, and writing. Now it comes to you, and not a moment too soon. It's about time. That's not my impatience. It's my deep, abiding hope. ❁



James Nieman
President



James Nieman

At heart this new strategic plan is about being timely, about engaging the times in which we now live.

epistle

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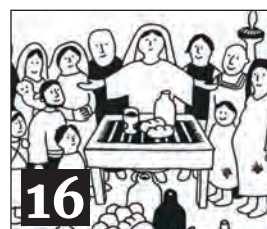
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Museum follows LSTC's lead in returning rare manuscript

Four years ago, LSTC received praise and a good amount of press for returning a rare 9th century Greek manuscript of the complete New Testament to the Greek Orthodox Church. A second rare manuscript is to be returned later this year to the monastery from which it was stolen in 1917.

The 10th-century vellum gospel is being returned by the American Bible Museum in Washington, D.C., which made the announcement in January. It will, however, be on exhibit until October, and as a gesture of goodwill, the Greek Orthodox Church added three additional manuscripts to the exhibit.

When LSTC returned the 9th century manuscript, LSTC President James Nieman said he hoped the seminary's action would inspire others to return stolen artifacts in their collections.

Codex 1424 found its way to a European book dealer and was purchased from a book dealer by the president of one of LSTC's predecessor schools. LSTC later received his entire rare book collection from his widow. ❀

LSTC appoints new director of admissions

Kamio Arigbabuwo joined LSTC March 1 as director of admissions.

Arigbabuwo brings six years of experience in higher education to the position, the last three years in admissions and recruitment with the Chicago School of Professional Psychology. She was responsible for managing recruitment from the school's new campus in New Orleans while continuing to recruit for the Chicago campus.

In addition to her work in admissions, Arigbabuwo was a founding member of the diversity commitment committee at the school and facilitated diversity-focused workshops for staff, faculty and students.

At LSTC, Arigbabuwo will



Kamio Arigbabuwo

set annual recruitment goals in collaboration with other staff and nurture relationships with prospective students and key influencers.

"LSTC's work with an enrollment consultant over the past year made it clear that our recruitment strategies would benefit from someone with the type of expertise Kamio has," said Scott Chalmers, dean of student services. "While the recruitment environment for psychology and theology are not identical, it was evident that Kamio has the skill set and deep commitments that will enable her to engage the very students who feel called to pursue their studies in a Chicago context."

Arigbabuwo has a master of education in cultural and educational policy studies from Loyola University, Chicago, and a bachelor of arts in psychology with a minor in African and Black Diaspora Studies from DePaul University, Chicago. ❀

Seminarian remains hopeful after boyfriend refused entry to U.S.

By Gail Kenny

Rachel Perkins expected to spend the holidays with her family in southern Wisconsin, introducing them to her boyfriend, who she met in September 2018 when she served in the ELCA Young Adult in Global Mission program in eSwatini.

Instead, the LSTC middle spent the holidays and J-term in the Kingdom of eSwatini (formerly Swaziland) after U.S. authorities wouldn't let

Nkosinathi "Nathi" Gami, into the country.

Gami arrived at O'Hare International Airport on Nov. 21 after two days of travel. The only black man in the customs line, he was singled out by TSA agents who searched his phone and belongings. Perkins was told Gami wouldn't be allowed in because he had the wrong visa. He had a B-2 visitor visa, appropriate for short-term visits like the two had planned. The agents said he needed a K-1 fiancé immigrant visa. Perkins

and Gami weren't yet engaged.

As Gami was sent back home from O'Hare, Perkins began telling her story to the media and talking to an attorney. Since the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol was not about to reverse their decision, she did the next best thing: she flew to South Africa and spent a month there meeting his family, going on hikes and on a safari.

And since they were advised to apply for the K-1 fiancé visa, they took care of one other important part. They got engaged. He also applied for his fiancé visa, which can take seven to nine months.

"We plan on getting married, God and government willing," said



David L. Lindberg died Nov. 16. He served on the faculty from 1963 until his retirement in 1995.

David Lindberg remembered for his versatility, helpfulness

David L. Lindberg, 90, professor emeritus of world missions and world religions and director of field education at LSTC for more than 30 years, died Nov. 16.

Lindberg served on the faculty



Nkosinathi "Nathi" Gami and Rachel Perkins

Perkins, who remains hopeful. "We find hope in our relationship being grounded in God, our relationship being focused on our faith... That's how Nathi and I met, that's how our relationship began. Our faith is a vital part of our relationship and that is never going to change. That is what... will continue to give us hope." ❀

Kenny is a first-year LSTC student who first blogged about Rachel and Nathi Nov. 21.

from 1963 until his retirement in 1995. From 1969-95 he directed field education. He was a missionary in Japan from 1955-63 for Augustana Lutheran Church in Yanai and Fukuyama. In retirement he took on the project of organizing the archives for LSTC and its predecessor schools.

Philip Hefner, longtime colleague, said two words come to mind when he thinks of Lindberg: "versatility and helpfulness." When the seminary's needs changed, Lindberg took on other roles. "In this latter position [field education] especially, he was very hands-on. He challenged students and comforted them to help them become better pastors."

Lindberg was a 1955 graduate of Augustana Lutheran Seminary, a predecessor school of LSTC. He served on the Lutheran Welfare Services of Illinois and Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, the John Brown Historical Society of Illinois, South Shore YMCA, Conference for Improved Muslim-Christian Relations, and the Urban Academy in Chicago. With Phyllis Anderson, he designed the ELCA-Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada Horizon Internship Program. ❀

Clarence Atwood Jr. receives Distinguished Service Award

Clarence Atwood Jr. received the LSTC 2020 Distinguished Service Award during the fall board of directors meeting held via Zoom.

Kristi Ferguson, board chairperson, said Atwood's



Clarence Atwood Jr.

"tireless work in shepherding the financial aspects of LSTC is well-known. His patience in explaining the intricacies of non-profit finances meant a great deal to those of us less familiar with such matters."

Atwood served on the board from 2010-2019 as a member of the administration and finance committee. He served as both secretary and chair and was also a member of the 2011-12 presidential search committee. Atwood was appointed to the LSTC foundation board of trustees in fall 2019 and continues to serve on the audit committee of the board.

Lynn Bird, his pastor at Zion Lutheran Church, Tinley Park, Ill., praised him for the readiness with which he responds and his "generous spirit, joyful serving and hopeful feedback."

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



Virtual commencement sends graduates ‘into the world’

By Stephani Shumaker

“Sent into the world” is the theme of LSTC’s 161st commencement, scheduled for May 16. The theme is based on John 17:18: “As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”

José David Rodríguez, Augustana heritage chair of global mission and world Christianity (who is retiring at the end of this academic year), will give the commencement address.

For the second year, the global pandemic has forced the commencement ceremony to be held virtually instead of in person. At press time, planning was still in

the early stages, but President James Nieman indicated during an LSTC town hall meeting in February that the ceremony scheduled for the traditional third Sunday in May will be as creative, meaningful and well done as possible.

Even without the chance to receive diplomas in person, more than 50 students will graduate and no doubt find creative ways to mark the day and celebrate with family and friends. Three graduates are profiled on these pages, but students receiving these degrees are expected to graduate: 35 MDiv, four MA, one MAM, six PhD, six ThD and two DMin in preaching. ❁

The grand hallway stands mostly quiet and empty these days, but it will soon become the artery to the hustle and bustle of LSTC life again. And as soon-to-be graduates like those profiled here note, it is a place of memories, lively discussions and a home away from home.

Katrina Endres-Steingraeber: from hallway dweller to pastor



LSTC was an easy choice for Katrina Endres-Steingraeber. She lives in Rockford, Ill., but the architecture of Hyde Park and a feeling that the Spirit was calling her to LSTC drew her here.

“It’s overwhelming to think my seminary education is coming to an end,” she said. “There are moments I feel like I’ve been in seminary forever, and then there are times where I can’t believe it’s only been

five years.” She said it’s impossible to name her favorite class.

“The classes I enjoyed most were often classes I didn’t expect to like, but overall, each class I took positively impacted my pastoral identity,” she said.

As a commuter student Endres-Steingraeber was often one of the first students to enter the LSTC building on class days. While waiting for the sunrise to illuminate

Nash Shaffer: he preached his way through seminary

Nash Shaffer didn't quite know what the Spirit had in store for him when he accepted a pulpit supply position in the Spring of 2019. "Supply preaching was such a hard gig to get. Every time I replied to a church needing a preacher, another student always beat me to the punch," he said.

Then came Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church on Chicago's South Side, which immediately took Shaffer up on his offer to supply preach. What he didn't realize until just days before that Sunday gig, was that it was also commencement.

"I almost didn't make it to graduation. My classmate had to call me as they were leaving LSTC to walk to the chapel," he said.

The pulpit supply went so well in the congregation that hadn't had a pastor in 10 years that they offered him a full-time position. Growing up Pentecostal, Shaffer now faced a dilemma: If he went back to LSTC for an MAM in preparation for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod qualifying ordination exams, he'd leave the church without a pastor. The decision came easy to Shaffer: "These people needed a pastor."

He was able to do both. Shaffer



served as their pastor and returned to LSTC just months after graduating with his MDiv.

"It didn't feel like I ever left because I literally didn't," Shaffer joked. Close to finishing his second degree, he is grateful for the theological foundation built during his MDiv that allowed him to now focus on expanding his worldview of Christianity and politics. He's been able to discover why the world is the way it is, he said, and that inspired his thesis: "Eyes Wide Shut: Dealing with African Americans Surviving America in a Post Trump Society."

And although his time at LSTC is drawing to a close, he hasn't ruled out another return: "I might come back to complete the DMin program... continuing learning from professors and an institution that has helped expand how I view the kingdom of God." ❁

the courtyard, she would sit in the grand hallway, catching up on reading or homework.

"The grand hallway sort of became my living room away from home," she said. While enjoying her warm cup of coffee and a scone from the Refectory, other students, faculty and staff often stopped to talk.

Her call to ministry was confirmed by her internship at Christ Lutheran Church in Belvidere, Ill., especially when she visited parishioners.

"Visiting anyone, whether it be

in a hospital room or their home is such a sacred act," she said, adding that even with beds and medial equipment, hospital rooms are especially sacred. "It's in these rooms you're invited into these tender moments of people's lives."

Endres-Steingraeber hopes she'll find a parish as welcoming, loving and supportive as Christ Lutheran. She said they seemed challenged by her sermons and teaching, and found creative ways to bring joy to worship despite COVID. ❁

Michael Markwell: youth ministry launched him to seminary

Graduating senior Michael Markwell first felt the call to be a pastor while serving as a youth ministry coordinator, a ministry he continued his first two years of seminary.

Markwell is grateful to Shepherd of the Hill Lutheran



Church in Lockport, Ill., where he not only received his call to ministry, but found support throughout his transformation into a ministerial leader. They viewed their role as a teaching congregation to be part of their ministry. "They were like my second home," he said.

On internship at Peace Lutheran Church in New Lenox, Ill., he experienced more growth and a seasoned supervisor who modeled public church. Markwell represented churches on the 2020 Census community task force, which made him realize "It wasn't just the church entrusting me with the office and role of pastor, but the entire community."

Markwell and his wife, Rachel, are looking toward post-graduation, when they'll be able to live in a permanent location for the first time since beginning seminary. He'll miss running into professors in the Hyde Park neighborhood and having theological discussions in the grand hallway between classes. ❁

Plan ahead

Dreaming about possibilities for LSTC more important than ever

By Elizabeth Chentland

Back in November 2019, the LSTC board and community members began looking forward to, and planning for, this point in time.

These leaders recognized early on the importance of authorizing the formation of a new strategic plan for calendar years 2021–2023. They knew providing ample time for the LSTC community and various stakeholders to gather, listen to one another and dream together about possibilities for seminary education and operations was now more important than ever.

Starting in January 2020, members of a small but mighty strategic plan steering committee

– comprised of LSTC faculty, staff, students and board members, and supported by a strategic planning consulting agency – examined LSTC’s core institutional commitments. Over the next several months, the group collected data and new information, held focus groups and listening sessions with internal and external partners, and began drafting their initial reports on how to best move the seminary forward.

By September, the group had summarized major insights and began suggesting priority areas for the seminary to focus on in upcoming years. By October, these priority areas were pulled together in a comprehensive, integrated

and credible plan, properly named “For Such a Time as This,” which was approved by LSTC’s board of directors in November.

Soon after, members of the LSTC community stepped forward to act as “owners” of various initiatives, identifying and beginning to implement the necessary tasks that would propel LSTC to goal realization.

So you’re probably saying: “Thanks for the background, now what?” The strategic plan is now public, as are the eight priorities (pulled from the final plan) that LSTC is focusing on in 2021. Now, we collaborate. Now we turn aspirations into action. ✿

Chentland is director of strategic marketing and communications.

Lena Washington,
director of dining services

All of the strategic plan discussions revealed the thoughtful and talented people LSTC has to move our seminary forward.



Marvin Wickware,
assistant professor of church and society and ethics

If LSTC faithfully follows through on its strategic plan commitments, it will be a seminary that fundamentally challenges a nation built on exploitation.



Erik Christensen,
pastor to the community and director of worship

This plan is our faithful effort to be and to form disciples for this moment in history.



LSTC's 2021 priorities (in alphabetical order)

Administrative alignment	Align personnel with functional areas to improve organizational structure, communication and staff retention.
Antiracism team and authentic diversity	Receive, affirm and endorse recommendations from the seminary's Antiracism Transformation Team in order to dismantle institutionalized white supremacy; Implement recommendations for theological education from the Strategic Authentic Diversity Task Force of the ELCA.
Curriculum review	Conduct a curriculum review to focus on course planning, new program creation and delivery practices, faculty hiring and paracurricular activities.
Enrollment pipelines	Enhance the student experience by developing and fostering strategic and diverse enrollment pipelines.
Program viability	Assess seminary opportunity costs and implement decisions to achieve program sustainability.
Redeveloped facilities	Explore redevelopment of main property/facilities to benefit the school and community.
Remote learning	Enhance shift of degree programs online to address remote learning challenges.
Scholarship support	Review student financial challenges and respond with scholarships attuned to distinctive needs, pre-enrollment financial counseling and finding a balance between employment and granting.

Esther Menn,
dean of
Academic
Affairs



The strategic planning process was an eye-opening and affirming process that I am confident will take LSTC to a new level.

Kristi Ferguson,
LSTC board of directors chairperson

In our data, the word 'partnership' came up repeatedly. Enhancing partnerships with congregations, synods, alumni and donors will be critical to the success of the strategic plan.



Follow our
progress by visiting
[lstc.edu/about/
strategic-plan](https://lstc.edu/about/strategic-plan)





21st century

These LSTC grads say their education prepared them for calls abroad

By Julie B. Sevig

Four alumni whose ministries were shaped by LSTC now hold all the ELCA missionary positions in the Middle East. They are Gabi Aelabouni (2005, MDiv) and Meghan Johnston Aelabouni (2006, MDiv), Carrie Ballenger (2009, MDiv) and Christie Manisto (2008, MDiv).

These four pastors recently gathered for a Zoom interview to

reminisce about their seminary days, discuss their current calls, and even offered current seminary students some advice. Without prompting or pressure, they were clear about one thing: their education and experiences at LSTC prepared them well for their ministries abroad.

Ballenger, who has served in the Holy Land the longest, says it was her seminary education that enabled her to walk into

communities other than her own. Contextual education on Chicago's South Side and an internship on the north side prepared her for what she thought would be an urban first call, so she was surprised to be called to a rural parish.

"Those experiences helped me to be able to walk into Jerusalem and connect with people," she said. "I didn't take a class on Middle Eastern history or the Israeli Palestinian



missionaries

What I learned at LSTC
is how to be a learner,
how to say 'I don't know.'

Carrie Ballenger,
Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem

LSTC graduate Carrie Ballenger (above left) leads
an Easter sunrise service on the Mount of Olives.

Not only were we encouraged, but LSTC pushed us to stretch ourselves. We were always encouraged to ask questions: Who is in the building? Who is not and why is that? That changed me and prepared me for this.

Christie Manisto, *St. Andrew's United Church of Cairo and St. Andrews Refugee Service*

conflict... and yet I feel like what I learned at LSTC is how to be a learner, how to say 'I don't know.' If as a missionary you walk into a context and say 'I know all the things and I'm here to give them to you' you're not going to last very long."

She says this is true if your call is to a foreign place or an hour down the road—learning and understanding the context fosters a relationship.

"I really credit LSTC for that," she continued. "Something changed about me during my time at the school."

Ballenger serves the English-speaking congregation of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem and has assisted the former and current bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and other organizations as a writer. "The longer I'm here, I notice they take my first draft," she said with good humor.

"I don't need to be the voice of the Palestinian people, but at the same time, I think that the reason I can do it is that I've gotten to know the people deeply," she said, adding that she arrived seven years ago with intellectual knowledge of the region and a heart for justice activism. "I've learned to be comfortable with the gray areas, and that's ongoing learning... The more I learn about people's lives I see how complicated it is here. That doesn't mean I'm less committed to justice. It just means I understand how complicated it is to get there—

to get to this place of peace based on justice. It's not as simple as flipping a switch. It's ongoing."

Meanwhile, in Cairo

Manisto is quick to agree with how LSTC prepared her for a global call.

"Not only were we encouraged, but LSTC pushed us to stretch ourselves," she said. Her internship on the South Side was in a mostly white congregation but an African American community. "We were always encouraged to ask questions: Who is in the building? Who is not and why is that? That changed me and prepared me for this."

Manisto and her husband Steve had interviewed for a different ELCA global mission position when their adventure GPS rerouted them to Egypt, in part because of Steve's penchant for studying Arabic.

Said Ailabouni, the ELCA director for the Middle East and North Africa, told them, "If you are up for a REAL adventure, go to Egypt!" Manisto recalled. "We're always up for an adventure, so we said 'OK, consider us for Egypt.'"

Manisto's call is split in two parts. She is pastor to St. Andrew's United Church of Cairo (serving an international congregation made up of expatriates and Egyptian nationals). She is also pastoral associate/chaplain to St. Andrews Refugee Service (StARS), which began as a safe place for displaced individuals to gather and learn English, and now serves 40,000 refugees displaced from the Horn of

Christie and Steve Manisto doing ministry in Cairo, Egypt.

Africa and Syria each year.

She does everything from preaching and pastoral care, to supervising security guards, to dealing with a weasel that jumped out of the church's sound system on Christmas and in early March had still avoided capture.

"One of the biggest eye openers is the location of the church in Egypt and why the church is here," she said. The church was planted by Scotland for the military who came as colonists. She is also responsible for six refugee congregations that meet there, supervising their pastors—one Ethiopian and the others Sudanese or South Sudanese.

"I spend a lot of time reflecting that I am a white woman from the west put into a position with authority over pastors who are from Sudan in a refugee organization," she said. "We talk a lot about that. We're refugee-led and at the same time, walking in from the global west you bring an incredible amount of privilege with you. There's a lot of disparity and incredible injustice. Much like the U.S., Egypt is steeped in racism, especially toward



individuals with refugee status, and especially toward those with dark skin. There's a lot of violence, there are a lot of horrific things that go on that my husband and I can basically walk through and not be touched. What does it mean to be here in accompaniment as missionaries—which is also a loaded word.”

Walking with others while recognizing their own privilege is complicated by the dynamics in the Arab world and alliances with Israel and Palestine.



A return home

The Aelabounis struggle with similar challenges. For Gabi, it is a return to the homeland he left in 2001.

“When I left, I thought when I came back things would be better, things would have changed and Palestinian people would have more of a chance for freedom and a just peace,” he said. “Coming back to a worse reality was shocking. Palestinian people are still under occupation, and that means not just people behind walls (the wall that separates the West Bank from Israel) but also a lot of harshness in their way of living, economy and health care. While we are living in Israel, on so many levels we live with privilege...

versus unprivileged people behind the wall, and that has been shocking to me. And scary at the same time, that we are in the 21st century and people are still suffering because of their privilege or lack of privilege. Here you can really feel, hear and touch this reality every day.”

Since the summer of 2019, he and his wife, Meghan, have been the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) country coordinators for the Jerusalem/West Bank program. In May, he will assume colleague Saïd's position, making him the primary contact between the ELCA and Lutheran/ecumenical partners in the region.

The Aelabounis had been living in

Meghan Johnston Aelabouni training the ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission.



Fort Collins, Colo., with Gabi serving the ELCA as director of the Fund for Leaders and Meghan working on her PhD, when they applied for the YAGM coordinators position.

“It all happened fast,” Meghan said. “But we knew how the YAGM program worked. We took a deep breath and said, ‘this seems like the call’ and so we said yes.”

Along with volunteers and partner church ELCJHL, they are responsible for all the logistics of the Jerusalem/West Bank YAGM program, including finding placements in congregations and host families. And when not under COVID lockdown, responsibilities include orientation, ongoing continuing education, retreats, spiritual formation, monthly events and check ins.

It’s an “amazing call,” Meghan says, this chance to accompany both the ELCJHL and the YAGMs. Gabi is reflective as he transitions to his new call, “So for me it’s a time of serving my community and bridging this community—the people in the Middle East and North Africa and the culture—with my home church, the ELCA. A blessing that I’ve been waiting for for a long time,” he said.

Across a crowded chapel

Gabi was a young adult himself when he took his first trip outside of Israel/Palestine to attend LSTC as an international student.

“What I experienced at LSTC was acceptance,” he said. “It provided a safe place for me and a model for what it means to live in a place respectful of who you are and where you came from and what you believe. That doesn’t mean you always agree, but there’s a respect for human beings, people’s humanity and dignity. That was the first time in my life that I felt that way. And that was LSTC.”

He says the people he first met at LSTC remain some of his “favorite people.”

“I trust them completely and they’ve walked with me until this point in my life... It’s wonderful to remember that journey and how



Carrie Ballenger shakes hands with Gabi and Meghan Aelebouni during their service of commissioning and installation. All three are LSTC graduates.

LSTC and the people shaped who we are today.”

That includes, of course, the woman whose eyes he met across a crowded chapel service on the first day. Although they dated throughout seminary, they didn’t make a show of it and rarely sat together in class, though often challenging one another in class discussions. One day she disagreed with him and blurted out, “Yeah, but Honey...”

Just as Gabi found acceptance at seminary, Meghan found challenge. “LSTC was the first place I was ever challenged on my whiteness... It was the first place I had meaningful relationships with faculty of color and peers of color. I would say something, and they’d say, ‘Well, it’s because you have the luxury of being white.’ No one had ever said that to me before.”

It was at LSTC that she began to come to a reckoning on racial and gender injustice, misogyny, queer phobia, and Islamophobia.

All four nod at the influence of LSTC and marvel at their current calls.

Groundbreaking leaders

“Three women serving in the Middle East? That’s a really big deal,” Ballenger says. “We’ve had ELCA women in this place where women are not usually ordained or

recognized as clergy. I think that’s a really cool thing, but I’m really proud of having three ELCA women in this region and that we are all [graduates of] LSTC. I feel like that’s something really important and probably has to do with how we were formed.”

“Amen to that,” adds Gabi.

Manisto is one of four women clergy in all of Egypt, where they don’t yet ordain women. Ballenger and Aelebouni are two of six ordained women in Israel-Palestine.

“You bring a new perspective that people need to hear here. And to see and to trust,” Gabi says to the women. “A lot of what people are going through here is based on what the culture tells them is right versus wrong. But when you are here you reinforce or support the idea and belief that I have, and many have here, that women’s leadership in the church matters. Women can make a difference. Being a female pastor in the church is not a sin. For you all to choose that path and choose to come here says a lot about who you are and what you can bring to this part of the world.”

Advice to students

And with that message of gratitude, Gabi dashed to another meeting, leaving his colleagues to offer up advice to seminarians:



Gabi and Meghan Aelabouni with their children Natalie, 9, Luke, 5, and Ethan, 12.

“Be open to surprises,” Ballenger said. “I went to seminary with a vision of myself in a robe and a stole and leading worship. That vision helped me get through seminary, but that vision is not at all what it looks like today. It was fine that it propelled me forward but be open to the fact that your ministry might be very, very different.”

Aelabouni said her feelings of inadequacy heading into her year-long exchange program to study in Munich, Germany, provided a life lesson she frequently pulls out of her “LSTC suitcase” when training YAGMs. She didn’t know German, but she knew how to fret.

“You can’t learn everything or know everything ahead of time,” she said. “No matter how much you know before you go, it won’t be enough... American culture focuses on productivity, achievement and perfectionism. I carried that with me as a pastor too. One of my greatest discoveries of ministry is that I can be flawed and imperfect and make mistakes and make people mad, and

it doesn’t make me less... There is something freeing about knowing I can’t be [fully] prepared.”

Manisto concurred. “Don’t be afraid. I had a great first call, but I was always so worried that if I said this or preached this, how will I be perceived? But I ended up not being fully who I was or wanted to be. It’s taken me awhile to figure that out.

“I think the church is wonderful, but it can be a hard place. It can be so hard. Don’t be afraid. Try that thing you want... and go for it. That’s one thing about global mission: there would be days in the parish that were fine, and even a little boring, but here it’s never boring, not one day. There’s always something that happens, it’s awesome and crazy all at the same time.” ☘

[Editor’s note: At press time, the ELCA decided not to move forward with the 2021–2022 YAGM year due to COVID-related complications in the U.S. and globally, and Meghan and Gabi will no longer serve as country coordinators. The Aelabounis remain in Jerusalem as Gabi transitions into his new position and Meghan serves as an accompanying spouse.]

Sevig is content and social media manager.

American culture focuses on productivity, achievement and perfectionism. I carried that with me as a pastor too. One of my greatest discoveries of ministry is that I can be flawed and imperfect and make mistakes and make people mad, and it doesn’t make me less.

Meghan Johnston Aelabouni
(2006, MDiv)

From pastoring

LSTC grad now serves in Iowa Senate

By Julie B. Sevig

It was never Sarah Trone Garriott's goal to run for political office, but then, she never intended to be a pastor either.

"I encountered work that I felt called to do, and these roles were ways to do that work," said Trone Garriott (2008, MDiv), who now represents the 22nd District of Iowa in the state senate.

As a parish pastor and an interfaith leader, she was asked to open a session of the senate in prayer. Before long, she was paying closer attention to state government and noticing legislation that seemed disconnected from community needs.

Meanwhile, she left parish ministry to work for the area's largest food pantry network, continuing to observe legislation that threatened SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits.

"They introduced this legislation without speaking with any of the feeding agencies in the state, and then refused to hear us as we resoundingly spoke out against it," she said. "The pandemic was the only thing that stopped them—thank goodness because the SNAP program was essential during this challenging time. If lawmakers do not listen to the community, they need to be replaced. I felt that I couldn't expect someone else to run if I wasn't willing to do it myself. So I stepped up."

LSTC played a role

Seminary not only prepared her well for parish ministry, but for her nonprofit work and now for her role as a senator. She rattles off the list of transferrable skills: public speaking, project planning, leadership, fundraising...

"But the most valuable thing was having to be a stranger time and again," she said, recalling multiple relocations with her husband Will—to Chicago for seminary, walking into people's lives as a hospital chaplain, and living in small West Virginia town for internship, and rural Virginia for first call.

"I've developed some skills to navigate new and stressful environments," she said. "I've had practice building relationships with lots of different kinds of people, and I have many stories to remind myself that something new always comes after an ending."

Navigating difficult issues, being in relationship with people who see things differently, trying to work through conflict together, loving people we disagree with — "these are things that I bring because of that [pastoral] experience," she told the Religion News Service during her campaign.

Challenges, joys

The pandemic has posed an "incredible challenge" she said as she began her senate role. Protocol set by the Republican majority didn't mandate masks or require staff to disclose if tested COVID positive.

"This means it is much more challenging to get to know my colleagues and I will have to find other ways to be present for constituents." The attack on the U.S. Capitol also made her worry about safety.

Her priority is to help Iowa and the nation recover the idea of the common good, investing in things that benefit all and create a more equitable world: public education, health care, natural resources.

To pinpoint joy, she thinks back on hospital chaplaincies in Chicago and Philadelphia: "There were surprising moments of joy in the worst of circumstances. Kind and committed people worked diligently behind the scenes for the good of others. I hope to encounter that at the capitol as well."

Trone Garriott said she sometimes wishes she could direct her

life in ways that would be easier on herself and her family, "but service is a calling, and each time you answer that call it gets a little easier to say 'yes' to the next call." ❀

I have many stories to remind myself that something new always comes after an ending.

Sarah Trone Garriott,
Iowa State Senator



to politics



manna and mercy

Dan Erlander's drawings perfect for remote teaching

By Barbara Rossing



One joy of teaching remotely on Zoom this past fall was using LSTC alum Daniel Erlander's illustrated textbook *Manna and Mercy: God's Unfolding Plan to Mend the Universe*. My colleague Assistant Professor Eunyung Lim, who was on maternity leave, designed the Bible Survey class using Jewish scholar James Kugel's *How to Read the Bible* as the main text. I added *Manna and Mercy*.

Dan pictures the Exodus story and manna as a lens for reading the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. "Pictures, like stories, are Dan's way of sneaking beneath people's radar," says Tom Witt, musician and friend. "Dan thought most people had a trap door in the back of their head and that stories and pictures—and

humor, but not necessarily doctrine or dogma—could sneak through this trap door into people's hearts."

Dan's sneakiest picture may be the pyramid of Pharaoh's Egypt economic system. Rulers, military and "big deals" at the top exploit slaves and people at the bottom, while a god figure and priests claim "this is the way it is... this is the way it always will be."

The antidote to empires' economic abuses is what Dan calls a "manna economy," where hoarding stinks and everyone has enough. God's classroom for this way of life is pictured as "Wilderness School," with Moses at a chalkboard and people sitting at little desks, learning crucial manna lessons. God's gift of food to hungry people teaches a manna way of life that Jesus also embodied in the New Testament. Dan introduces Hebrew terms such as *nahalah*, the "land inheritance of many common folk" that must not be sold. Students used that lens to

read the story of Naboth's vineyard, where the prophet Elijah condemns wealthy king Ahab for seizing the *nahalah*. Dan's wonderful disarming humor presents radical economic concepts in a gentle way.

Through the lens of mercy, Dan critiques exclusivist authors and voices in the Bible, such as Ezra and Nehemiah who expelled foreign wives. Dan shows how Ruth and Jonah were written in the Persian Period as a critique of Ezra's theology, to give a more expansive vision towards including foreigners.

While oppressive voices sometimes prevailed in biblical history, Dan makes clear that these bursts of exclusivism cause God to weep. With gentle humor Dan embeds radical inclusiveness in unexpected voices, including a pair of prairie dogs whose wisecracks enliven the Bible stories.

Enter: Jesus
God sends Jesus, Immanuel, to



call people back to God's vision of manna and mercy.

Dan illustrates Jesus' temptation in the wilderness as a "Messiah Success Seminar," one of my favorite drawings. Satan tries to tempt Jesus to follow Plan A, using military force and political power, but Jesus chooses Plan B: vulnerable love, compassion, mercy and food for all. The feeding of the 5,000, healings, and the Last Supper all embody this radical economy of manna and mercy that leads Jesus to the cross. But "Jesus and his troublemaking go merrily on!"

Even the apostle Paul drew on the manna story in exhorting the Corinthians to share their money with those in need in Jerusalem. Dan pictures Paul writing at his desk with his diploma "Chief of Sinners" on the wall, urging the Corinthians to "live like the wilderness manna people" by releasing their excess manna (2 Cor 8:1-15).

Teaching appreciation for the

diversity of biblical authors and their contrasting theologies was one of my goals, supported by additional articles such as Norman Gottwald's and Robert Warrior's articles on the conquest narrative. Students appreciated the scholarship reflected in Dan's hand-written endnotes and drawings, distinguishing the Yahwist (J) author, from the Elohist (E) and Priestly Writer (P). One cartoon pictures these biblical authors writing at desks, with T-shirt logos identifying them as J, E or P.

Articles by African American, Asian and Latinx authors (including one by my teaching assistant Karen Kang) expanded the diversity of perspectives on biblical stories.

Senior Kristin Schmid says Dan's book helps her envision teaching in a congregation. "Erlander does a great job of taking on big themes in a very understandable, compelling and even humorous way. This is helpful as someone who is learning how to

teach others," she said.

God's radical vision of manna for all critiques the "crabby people" and "big deals" of our world by inviting students into a counter-story that is daring and fun. Women and the whole creation are central to the story, including Miriam's song at the Exodus, Deborah the liberator, the women at the empty tomb when God raised Jesus and a banquet where Jesus hosts all creatures.

While "fun" is not a word most people associate with the Bible, Dan's humor and pictures open up that important and fun dimension of scriptural imagination. *Manna and Mercy: A Brief History of God Unfolding Plan to Mend the Entire Universe* (1992) draws on top-notch scholarship and served as a great textbook on Zoom. I recommend it! 🌿

Rossing is professor of New Testament and a long-time friend of Dan Erlander, who received the "Faithful Servant" Distinguished Alumni Award from LSTC in 2006. Manna and Mercy—both the original and a new version and accompanying resources are available at Augsburgfortress.org.

Teaching & learning in a pandemic

By Stephani Shumaker

Though many things have come to a screeching halt due to the pandemic, LSTC has made sure education is not one of them.

Eric Kyle, associate professor and director of contextual education, spearheaded the transition from in-person classes to online.

“Immediately there was initial shock of what seemed like an overnight shift to online classes,” said Kyle, whose first step was to use Reading Week for faculty small groups that would brainstorm the transition.

Kim Wagner, assistant professor of homiletics and Axel Jacob and Gerda Maria (Swanson) Carlson Chair in Homiletics, said it became more than just learning to teach online. Everything faculty had been doing had to move online as well: “faculty meetings, committee work and we just so happened to have a faculty search amid all of this. We were not only focused on creating community for students online, but creating community for faculty.”

When faculty member Brooke Petersen first learned classes would be adapted to an online platform for the 2020–2021 academic year, she recalls thinking, “We’re going to have to make this work.”

Petersen, who wears many hats, including teaching, director of MDiv and MA programs and candidacy coordinator, took advantage of a course focused on online pedagogies offered through the University of Wisconsin. The

class put the faculty learners in the position of “online student.”

“Throughout the class, I was able to learn what I thought worked and didn’t work as an online student. I was constantly thinking about how I would tweak the class that I would be teaching.”

Wagner participated in the same course and echoed Petersen: “Through being an online student I learned just how difficult sitting and staring at a screen can be. If students are required to be in Zoom for my class, I want it to be

were] balancing new roles that aren’t conducive to online learning.

“Many students were managing online learning with children and other family members completing online learning in the same space,” Petersen said.

“You can show up however you need to show up,” she often told her classes. “If I normalize my children popping up during class, then my students feel less shame when theirs do as well,” she said.

Wagner also struggled to create a space for students to be

It’s easier to hide your emotions when you’re on a screen. I had to show up fully human to the classroom so other students could bring their full humanity as well.

Brooke Petersen, LSTC faculty member

necessary, valuable and helpful.”

Showing up fully human

Faculty have been challenged to find ways of bringing a “human touch” to a virtual setting: “It’s easier to hide your emotions when you’re on a screen. I had to show up fully human to the classroom so other students could bring their full humanity as well.” She said she wanted to normalize the struggles of students, [especially those who

authentic. “During quarantine it was very lonely,” she said. “I knew how important it was to cultivate a space where students care for one another and are cared for.”

Though the pandemic has made fostering online community and relationships with students difficult, Petersen said it has allowed professors to engage students with different learning styles—styles that might not be beneficial or utilized in a classroom setting.



Brooke Petersen teaches remotely.

She has used multiple kinds of resources, such as videos, readings, discussion posts, music and podcasts. Online learning has allowed students to access material in multiple ways, she said.

Petersen believes faculty members approached this challenge with a real desire to continue to have quality teaching. This semester the IT department and Kyle are offering faculty workshops centered around online pedagogies, as well as how to better utilize Zoom.

"I feel fortunate to be a part of a faculty that both cares about our students and cares about high-quality learning," Petersen said. "It's a gift to do it alongside awesome folks."

Missing discussion the most

When Kelsey Kresse learned during internship that she'd have to spend her senior year of seminary online, she felt overwhelmed at the thought of losing the discussion-based aspect of her classes.



Kelsey Kresse misses class discussions. "I learn so much from listening and conversing with my peers in class," Kresse said.

"I learn so much from listening and conversing with my peers in class," she said.

When confined to Zoom squares, it's difficult to read the room, contribute to discussions, and tell when another student or professor is done talking.

"It's difficult to watch simultaneously what my professor and their body language is saying, along with the body language and faces of my peers," she said. "So often, the entire class will unmute themselves at once to respond, and we're left speaking over each other." Or, students hold back, afraid of speaking over someone else.

Not all features of an in-person class have been lost in the transition, however. Craig Mueller, her professor for spiritual formation, for instance, used the chat feature to ask playful questions such as what they're eating and drinking. Students' ability to respond casually in the chat imitated the casual conversation they might have on class break, she observed.

What often can't be replicated in an online class is the ability to be a community together. When the Jan. 6 capitol attack occurred and class ended early: "I was left to process what was unfolding in our country alone." 🌸

Shumaker is a graduating senior and student worker in the communications and marketing department.

By Jan Boden

Members of the Class of 1970 are proving that good things can come of a casual conversation.

In 2019, Allan Rohlfs and Brian Eklund (both MDiv, 1970), and Matt Keadle (2011, MDiv) got together with Anna Moorhead, then a new gift officer for LSTC, for a get-to-know you conversation.

During their visit, Eklund mentioned that the fraternity at his other alma mater, Muhlenberg College, was funding a scholarship there. That sparked the idea that Rohlfs and Eklund could organize their class to do the same thing for LSTC.

"I had gotten a letter from my alma mater, Augustana College, asking me to send them the RMD (required minimum distribution) from my IRA," Rohlfs said. "And I thought, 'That's a great idea! We could ask members of the Class of 1970 to do that to fund a scholarship at LSTC.'"

Rohlfs had been especially concerned about LSTC's ability to compete with the full-tuition scholarships that he had heard several other ELCA seminaries are providing to every incoming masters student. He wanted to challenge his class to fully fund one student and then see if other classes could do the same.

He did some calculating and inquiring: there were 55 MDiv graduates in the Class of 1970. Some have died and some have lost touch with LSTC due to life transitions. In October, 14 classmates attended their 50-year virtual reunion where Rohlfs and Eklund shared their idea.

'Take a free ride'

"Together we came up with the idea that if each class member gave sacrificially, we could provide a total ride for one person. We want to challenge each class after ours to do the same. That way LSTC could give a free ride to many more, if we could, to each of the incoming students," Rohlfs said.



Brian Eklund, Matt Keadle and Allan Rohlfs outside of St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Los Angeles, Calif., where a conversation turned to inspiration to fund a scholarship.

Funding the future

Class of 1970 challenges itself, other classes

This wasn't the only plan class members considered to fund scholarships. They discussed creating an endowment, but many of them favor the impact of giving the scholarship immediately. This would mean pledging to repeat the gift for five years.

"If each successive class did the same, then we will have created a succession for the scholarship fund," Rohlfs reasoned.

Another reason to give the gift now is their awareness of the changing nature of seminary education. With changes in the church, the candidacy process, recruitment and questions about what this kind of education will look like a few years from now, flexibility is an advantage.

The energetic but unofficial steering committee for the

scholarship has met several times with Bill Myatt, director of philanthropic engagement, and Jessica Houston, alumni services and events manager to move ahead with their efforts. Volunteers so far include Pete Manfred, Fred Sickert, Brian Eklund, John Heins, Keith Nelson, Albert "Bert" Bodaski, Dennis Ellison, Paul Swanson, Kurt Hendel and Allan Rohlfs.

"The Class of 1970 has a great plan to help future leaders afford LSTC. I encourage other classes to consider the challenge they have made. Imagine the impact that would have for LSTC students," Myatt said. 🌱

Boden is public relations manager.

You can make a gift to LSTC too. Scan to learn more:



Echols Preaching Prize Celebration on the horizon

This year the James Kenneth Echols Prize for Excellence in Preaching is taking the form of a *celebration* of preaching.

Students were invited to submit a sermon on the theme Food and Feasting and up to four finalists will be selected to preach April 15 as part of the Echols Preaching Prize Celebration. Each finalist will receive prize money for their selection and participation. Students were urged to think imaginatively and theologically about the theme—whether food justice, eucharist, biblical story or something else entirely, yet still grounded in rich exegetical work with a biblical text.

This annual preaching event was established and funded by LeRoy T. Carlson to promote quality and excellence of preaching and to honor Echols, who served as LSTC's president. The preaching celebration will be online and livestreamed. ✱

'For Such a Time as This' is Giving Day theme

April 6-7 is LSTC's 4th annual 24-hour Giving Day. LSTC hopes to raise \$125,000 from 325 donors like you—your participation is essential to the seminary's success!

Giving Day 2021 takes its theme from the seminary's 2021-23 strategic plan, For Such a Time as This. It will focus on two initiatives within the plan: scholarships and antiracism.

In an all-virtual format, watch LSTC's social media platforms for messages from faculty, students,

alumni and friends. Marvin Wickware Jr., assistant professor of church and society and ethics, will present the third in a series, "Talking About Antiracism." Recordings of the first two lectures are on LSTC's YouTube channel.

Kurt and Jobey Hendel and Ken and Eloise Dale have made sacrificial lead gift commitments, and hope you'll join them in giving. Contact Jessica Houston at jhouston@lstc.edu or Mark Lowry at [mark.lowry@lstc.edu](mailto:lowry@lstc.edu) for more information or to get involved. ✱



LSTC offers 'Becoming a Hybrid Church' free workshop April 16

Dave Daubert has literally written the book about being a hybrid church, both in person and online. LSTC is offering a free workshop (lstc.edu/events) with Daubert April 16, 9-10 a.m. CST, during which participants will discuss how to do



Dave Daubert

this wisely and well.

Daubert offers keys to using technology and the web as tools for ministry while also using more familiar "on-the-ground" ministry methods. An ELCA pastor, he founded and leads Day 8 Strategies (day8strategies.com), which works with leaders and congregations. Daubert wrote *Becoming a Hybrid Church* with Richard Jorgensen. ✱

Annual Capitol Hill gathering will be online

LSTC will be represented by students, staff and faculty at Ecumenical Advocacy Days, an annual gathering on Capitol Hill of Christian advocates and activists. This year, under the theme "Imagine! God's



Earth and People Restored," participants will gather virtually April 18-21.

This is an opportunity to support the global movement centered on, and led by, the people and communities most vulnerable to climate impacts due

to historic racial and colonial inequities.

Participants will worship, delve deeply into the pressing issues of the day, and lift their voices by speaking truth to power on Capitol Hill. Together, they will reimagine a world that lives out the values of justice, equity and community. ✱

Delbert Anderson

1932–2020 | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1958, Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary 1966 S.T.M.* Delbert Anderson, 88, died Oct. 4. He served as a missionary with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong from 1959 to 1969 and as program director for East Asia from 1970–1997 for the LCA and the ELCA. He is survived by Betty, his wife of 63 years, four children and seven grandchildren.

Richard “Dick” Brendel

1931–2020 | *Concordia Seminary Class of 1972, DTh Christ Seminary –Semnexus 1987* Dick Brendel, 89, of Belleville, Ill., died Nov. 30. Brendel served congregations in Pennsylvania and Michigan before being called to Peace Lutheran Church in Belleville, where he served for 26 years. He was on the board of directors for Wartburg Theological Seminary and was past president and board member for Belleville Public Schools. He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Anna “Toni” Brendel, four children, seven grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

Daniel Defassio

1957–2021 | *Class of 1983* Daniel Defassio, 63, died Jan. 22. He served parishes in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Arizona, and was a police chaplain for 38 years. He is survived by his wife of 41 years, Sue, four children and five grandchildren.

John (Jack) Elliott

1935–2020 | *Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Class of 1960* Jack Elliott, 85, of Oakland Calif., died Dec. 13. He was professor emeritus of theology and religious studies and former director of the honors program in the humanities at the University of San Francisco (Calif.), where he served since 1967. He held the longest tenure of all non-Roman Catholic theologians at Jesuit universities in the United States. He retired from full-time teaching in 2001 and is survived by his wife of almost 58 years, Linde, and their two sons.

Charles H. Gustafson

1928–2021 | *Class of 1954 and 1972* Charles H. Gustafson, 92, died Jan. 1 in Palm Harbor, Fla. He served parishes in Pennsylvania and New York, including 21 years as pastor of Bethel Lutheran Church in Jamestown N.Y. He served several terms on the Upstate New York Synod church council, synod committees and conference

dean. He was also a night hospital chaplain and a member of the board of trustees of Thiel College. He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Esther Parmenter Gustafson, two children, four grandchildren and a great-grandchild.

Janet C. Jones

1940–2021 | *Class of 1995* Janet C. Jones, 80, of Glen Ellyn, Ill., died Jan. 10. She served congregations in Beloit, Wis., and Marengo, Leland and Naperville, Ill. She is survived by two children and five grandchildren.

Wilbert Martin Ericson

1921–2021 | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1953* Wilbert Ericson, 99, died Jan. 30 in Geneva, Ill. Ericson graduated from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy and served on USCG ships provisioning troops in the Pacific Theater during World War II. After graduating from seminary, he moved to Japan with his wife and two children, where he served as an ELCA missionary until 1987. He settled in Aurora, Ill., upon his return, and continued to serve local congregations. He is survived by three children from his first marriage, four stepsons from his second marriage, 13 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

John Martin Leaf

1938–2021 | *Class of 1970* John M. Leaf, 82, died Jan. 5 in Moline, Ill. Leaf served in the U.S. Army before graduating from Augustana College, Rock Island, Ill., in 1966. He served four parishes in Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois until he retired in 2003. He and his wife Helene moved back to the Quad Cities where he served local parishes as interim and visitation pastor. He is survived by his wife, three children and three grandchildren.

Kermit Robert Lauterbach

1934–2020 | *Class of 1984* Kermit Lauterbach, 86, died Dec. 26. He worked as a teacher and administrator in several Lutheran schools in Illinois and Minnesota for 30 years before he was ordained. He then served All Saints Lutheran Church in Olmsted Falls, Ohio, until retiring. He organized the Tri State basketball tournament among Lutheran schools in Illinois, Wisconsin and Iowa, which continues to this day. He also contributed to several Lutheran publications, served on the English District and English Synod board of directors and on the Northeastern Ohio Synod Council, and was an

internship supervisor. He is listed in the first editions of Marquis' *Who's Who in Religion*. He is survived by his wife of over 66 years, Carol Jean, five children, 11 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren.

Roger A. Nelson

1926–2021 | *Class of 1969* Roger Nelson died Jan. 29. He served in the Army Air Corps during World War II. While flying one of the last missions, his bomber was shot down and he and the crew parachuted to safety. Following the war, he married his high school love and became president of Interstate General Contractors of Chicago. LSTC provided him a change in careers. He spent 18 years serving Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Northbrook, Ill., while also completing studies for a master of science in theology and a doctorate in ministry at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. He served on the board of directors of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois—including two terms as board president. After retiring in 1987 he and his wife Marion helped establish an English-speaking congregation in Ngaoundere, Cameroon, Africa. When they returned, he served 10 interim ministries over 15 years in the Metropolitan Chicago Synod. He was preceded in death by his wife, to whom he was married 73 years. He is survived by two daughters, five grandsons and five great-grandchildren.

Robert (Bob) E. Mader

1934–2020 | *Augustana Theological Seminary class of 1961* Robert E. Mader, 86, of Sartell, Minn., died Dec. 13. Mader served parishes in Virginia and Minnesota. For much of his career he was chaplain at Faribault State Hospital and the Minnesota Correctional Facility in St. Cloud. Survivors include his wife, Pat, three daughters; three grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Orville W. Nyblade

1926–2020 | *Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary Class of 1954* Orville W. Nyblade, 94, of Gettysburg, Pa., died Dec. 16. He served in Tanzania 1955–1991. He was pastor of several parishes in Central Tanzania, served a term as education secretary and vice president of the Central Synod of the Lutheran Church of Central Tanganyika, and he taught for 24 years at The Lutheran Theological College, Makumira (LTCM)

of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania. In addition, Nyblade was editor of the Africa Theological Journal. He is survived by his wife of 69 years, June, five children, 10 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Wayne E. Peterson

1921–2020 | *Augustana Theological Seminary class of 1946* Wayne E. Peterson, 99, of Waterford, Mich., and Palm City, Fla., died Nov. 14. Peterson served congregations in Iowa, Michigan and Minnesota for 37 years before retiring in 1983. During his ministry he was president of the Iowa Conference and the Superior Conference Luther Leagues. He was on the board of Christian service of both the Superior and the Minnesota Conferences. He served on the executive board, the church vocation committee, and the examining committee of the Michigan Synod. He was board chairman of Psychological Studies of Michigan. He was preceded in death by his wife Maxine. He is survived by his wife Jean, a daughter and son, two grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Norman Vernon Ryding

1934–2020 | *Augustana Theological Seminary class of 1959* Norman Vernon Ryding, 86, of Michigan City, Ind., died Nov. 5. Ryding also earned a doctorate. He served 39 years, 12 years at the former Zion Lutheran Church in Michigan City before retiring in 1998. Other ways Ryding served include: county hospice board, police chaplain, ELCA social ministry committee, health and welfare council and campus minister at Purdue University. He was preceded in death by his wife Nancy and is survived by his three sons and five grandchildren.

Andrew John (Andy) Tetzlaff

1930–2021 | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1959* Andy Tetzlaff, 90, died Jan. 8 in Georgetown, Ind. Tetzlaff taught school for several years before he was drafted into the military to serve in Korea. When he left the military, he enrolled in seminary. He served Immanuel Lutheran Church in Altona, Ill., and St. Marks Evangelical Lutheran Church in Polo, Ill. He is survived by six children, six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife of 66 years, Dora.

Welcome

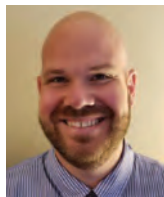
Ceciley R. Akins

has joined the advancement team as philanthropic engagement associate. Her work is focused on major gifts and strengthening relationships with donors. Sandra Nelson, vice president for advancement, noted Akins' wide range of skills and experience with both nonprofit and for-profit organizations. Akins has worked in fundraising, corporate and foundation relations, donor relations and grant writing for Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill., and By The Hand Club for Kids in Chicago. Prior to shifting to fundraising, she worked in marketing and advertising for nine years for Tribune 365 and Children's Habilitation Center. She holds a BA in speech communications from Chicago State University.



Mark T. Lowry

has joined the advancement team as philanthropic engagement associate. Sandra Nelson, vice president for advancement, said Lowry will help LSTC with more robust engagement of volunteers and organizations. Lowry has worked in both higher education and nonprofit organizations for 20 years, most recently as associate director of alumni engagement for Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. He was senior manager and community manager for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life. He is also a consultant in leadership training and development. He holds a bachelor of arts in elementary education, language arts from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville.



Jay Alanis retires from LSPS executive role

Jay Alanis,

executive director of Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest (LSPS), early this year announced his retirement that will become effective June 30.

LSPS is a cooperative effort of Wartburg Theological Seminary (Dubuque, Iowa) and LSTC. Both thanked Alanis for his "creative and dedicated service to the mission of LSPS for more than 20 years."

Alanis served LSPS since 2000 as associate professor, academic dean, development officer and as executive director the past 11 years. He said he is grateful for the support of presidents and deans at both seminaries, but that it is time



for someone else to "lead LSPS into God's preferred future." He will move to the Rio Grande Valley of south Texas later this year to further serve the church in ministry, he said.

"Our partnership enriched and enlarged the vision and legacy of the original founders, to be a theological training program that would serve the needs of the Hispanic community and thus serve the whole church," Alanis said in his announcement.

He said intensives in Hispanic ministry trained countless students, clergy, laity and ecumenical partners. With the help of partners and donors, an enhanced programming with certificates in theological studies and training in cultural competency skills implemented a vision for a more inclusive church. "Our alumni now serve throughout the nation." 🌱

Godspeed

For more than a year, LSTC community gatherings have been on Zoom, including the times we've gathered to say goodbye to colleagues. Yet technology still allows us to "reach out" in blessing one another. **Langston Roberson**, gift processing and data services manager, resigned from his position in early December to work for The Josselyn Center. "Langston has been an integral part of the advancement team for more than four years, has held responsibility for many aspects of our work and was instrumental in modernizing gift processing and data operations. His technical aplomb and strategic thinking have been extremely valuable," said John Damer, director of advancement operations.



1970

Brian Eklund (MDiv) received an honorary doctor of divinity from Muhlenberg College at their commencement services in October.

1980

Ron Glusenkamp (Christ Seminary–Seminex, MDiv) retired from the ELCA Churchwide staff in December. He led the ELCA comprehensive fundraising campaign and recently focused on the World Hunger Appeal. In October he was a guest on “Hope Matters” a video interview series. He published “Recipe for action” in the November *Living Lutheran* magazine.

1981

Stewart W. Herman III (MA) was quoted in the October *Living Lutheran* story, “Discipleship in a Democracy: How should Lutherans be involved in politics?”

1982

Carolyn Fredriksen (MDiv) retired from full-time parish ministry in November.

1983

David Lowry (ThM; 1986, PhD) published “Liberation from hypocrisy” in the October *Living Lutheran* magazine.

1989

Mark Anderson (MDiv) was quoted in a Nov. 20 *Des Moines Register* article, “‘We’ve made the lonely even lonelier’: Rural Iowa’s churches grapple with difficult restrictions as COVID-19 cases explode.”

2000

Peter Perry (MDiv; 2006, ThM; 2009, PhD) was featured in *The Biblical Storyteller* article, “Telling difficult stories in difficult times: An NBSI scholar and storyteller discussion on Habakkuk,” in the Outreach Issue 2021.

2002

Carmelo Santos-Rolon (MDiv; 2004, ThM; 2010, PhD) published “In times of pandemic and systemic injustice” in the October *Living Lutheran* magazine.

2003

Janelle Rozek Hooper (MDiv) published “The plate of blessing” in the November *Living Lutheran* magazine.

2005

William Flippin Jr. (ThM) published “A song after silence” in the December *Living Lutheran* magazine.

2006

Steve Jerbi (MDiv) is now serving as minister of worship and Christian formation at University Congregational United Church of Christ, Seattle, Wash. He previously served as the transition pastor at Lāna’i Union Church, a UCC congregation on the island of Lāna’i in Hawaii.

2007

Joel Cruz (ThM; 2009, PhD) published “Queridos santos: A perspective on the Day of the Dead” in the November *Living Lutheran* magazine.

Elaina Salmon (MDiv) contributed “Back to school blessing” to the Metropolitan Chicago Synod’s fall *Metro Word* magazine available online. She writes about offering drive-up back-to-school blessings and treat bags to ease people’s anxiety during the pandemic.

2008

Sarah Trone Garriott (MDiv) was elected to the Iowa State Senate representing District 22. Her top priority is to make healthcare accessible and affordable. [See page 14]

2009

Yehiel Curry (TEEM; 2013, MDiv) appears in a College Conversation for Lewis University, his alma mater.

Ben Dueholm (Lutheran Year) preached “A Scarce and Precious Word” on “Day 1” on Jan. 17.

Angela Khabeb (MDiv) and her family provided a holiday greeting Dec. 25 on Good Morning America’s “Faith Friday.”

2010

Jason Chesnut (MDiv) published “How to record your lectionary library videos like a pro!” in *The Biblical Storyteller*, Outreach Issue 2021, from the Network of Biblical Storytellers International.

Niveen Sarra (ThM; 2013, PhD) published “A message of solidarity: A Palestinian interpretation of the nativity” in the December *Living Lutheran* magazine.

2011

Sheri Kling (MATS) is host of on-demand videos for the Deeper Rhythm YouTube channel. Her video “What is *Spirituality*? (and why should I care?)” was released Dec. 16.

Priscilla Paris-Austin (MDiv) is quoted in the article “A gift of ministry: Embracing mom-pastors and a mothering God” in the December *Living Lutheran* magazine.

2012

Vance Blackfox (MATS) was a presenter for the 2021 DreamWeek Summit based in San Antonio,



Texas, and streamed live on Jan. 16. This year’s theme was Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. DreamWeek’s annual summit of civic and civil engagement “invites all to participate in an open forum where real-world issues are discussed in a well-balanced manner, with the understanding that the truest voices will always prevail.” Look for it on DreamWeek’s Facebook page.

2013

Candice Wassell (MDiv) was installed as senior pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, O’Fallon, Ill., Nov. 8. She has been associate pastor of the congregation since 2014.

2014

Ben Adams (MDiv) reported in the Metropolitan Chicago Synod’s *Metro Word* on how the South Loop Campus Ministry he leads in Chicago is continuing to function during the pandemic.

2015

Lydia Hernandez-Marcial (ThM; 2020, PhD) on Jan. 1 joined the Wartburg Theological Seminary faculty as assistant professor of Hebrew Bible.

Kristin Klade (MDiv) is pictured with the article “A gift of ministry: Embracing mom-pastors and a mothering God” in the December *Living Lutheran* magazine.

2016

Francisco Herrera (ThM; PhD candidate) was the Nov. 17 guest on “Hope Matters” a video interview series hosted in Santa Monica, Calif.

2017

Marcus Lohrmann (Lutheran year) contributed the commentary “Prayer is a vulnerable project” in the Nov. 11 *San Diego Union-Tribune*. He is pastor of Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church, La Mesa, Calif.

Louis Tillman IV (MDiv) was the subject of the *Baptist News* article “East Baltimore pastor weaves network of ecumenical care and concern.” He talks about his passions: ecumenical partnerships, climate change and racial justice. He and his congregation. St. Phillip’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in East Baltimore, Md., were also featured in the Jan. 29 *Baltimore Sun* reader commentary, “Happy to see Baltimore take action on climate change – in court or in church.”

Robert (Todd) Wright (MDiv) started a new call Feb. 1 as director of pastoral care for Bethany of the Northwest, a continuing care ministry of the ELCA in Everett, Wash.

2018

Josh Evans (MDiv) was featured in the *Glenview Herald* story “New St. Philip Lutheran pastor offers inclusion as part of his mission.” He began his call at St. Philip, Glenview, Ill., in August.

Nominate your peers for an award

LSTC’s alumni board is accepting nominations through April 21 for the 2021 Distinguished Alumni Awards, which will be presented during Homecoming 2021 in October. Go to lstc.edu/news-events/awards to see the award categories and a link to a nomination form.

Scan to learn more



2020



From left, Ashley Dellagiacoma, Morgan Gates, Chris Markert, Jerry Wirtley, Charles Graves IV and Marvin Havard at the ordination of Morgan Gates.

Morgan Gates (MDiv) was ordained Nov. 21 at Peace Lutheran Church, College Station, Texas. She is serving as Houston Area Campus Pastor, called through the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Council.

Troy Medlin (MDiv) was ordained Nov. 15 at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Chicago (online service). He is associate pastor of Grace Lutheran Church and School, River Forest, Ill.

José Rodríguez Páez (MDiv) was featured in the *Metro Word* article "Two paths toward mission," Metropolitan Chicago Synod. He is serving as a mission developer in Elgin, Ill.

Kristen Schmid (MDiv) was ordained Jan. 17 at St. John's Lutheran Church, Springfield, Ill., (livestreamed). She is serving as pastor of St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Camden, Ind., and Faith Lutheran Church, Logansport, Ind.

Future Alumni

Denise Rector (PhD student) contributed a lament and a prayer on racism to the new ELCA liturgy and song supplement, *All Creation Sings*, and wrote "The Work of Lamenting Racism in *All Creation Sings*" on the ELCA worship blog. She is quoted about the project in the October *Living Lutheran* magazine. She also wrote "Race and the Gift of Lament" in *DIALOG: A Journal of Theology*.

MDiv students **Kelsey Kresse**, **Karl Anliker**, **Charlotte Anliker** and **Erie Sara** appeared in a *Chicago Sun Times* photo on Nov. 4. They took part in a vigil held in downtown Chicago urging that every vote be counted.

Klaus-Peter Adam, associate professor of Old Testament, presented "What the Bible says about race" for a congregational adult class series.

Kathleen D. (Kadi) Billman, professor emeritus of pastoral theology, gave virtual presentations entitled "Where is God: Finding Peace Over Anxiety" and "Where is God: Finding Joy Over Grief."

She also wrote "A Breadth of Belonging: Navigating Interreligious and Intercultural Spaces" in the January issue of *Currents in Theology and Mission*.



Erik Christensen, pastor to the community and director of worship, was panelist for the Vital Congregations Cohort of the ELCA's Congregational Vitality Training, a discussion designed to give participants a deeper understanding of the processes and practicalities involved in congregational revitalization and renewal. He also contributed preaching helps to the January issue of *Currents in Theology and Mission*.

Ed Krentz, Christ Seminary-Seminex professor emeritus of New Testament, gave a congregational presentation on "The Reformation and Lutheran Identity Today."

Craig Mueller, auxiliary faculty, was appointed to the advisory council of the Institute of Liturgical Studies. He also served on the hymnody working group and prepared hymn indexes for the recent ELCA worship supplement *All Creation Sings*.

James Nieman, president, published "World Mission Institute Welcome" in the January *Currents in Theology and Mission*.

Eliseo Pérez-Álvarez, associate professor of Lutheran Systematic Theology and Global Lutheranism, wrote the foreword for *Eu Plantei Essa Rosa: Liberating Mennonite Missions in Brazil* by Gleen & Lois Musselman. Florida: Editorial Acentos, 2021; wrote *Freed to Free: Rethinking Luther's The Freedom of a Christian (1520) From Abya Yala and the Turtle Island*.

Brooke Petersen, director of MDiv and MA programs, coordinator for candidacy and lecturer, spoke

about "Building Foundations of Resilience in a Pandemic" to the spouses of international students, and did a workshop "Caring for Self and Others in a Time of Pandemic" at an internship cluster retreat.

Barbara Rossing, professor of New Testament, co-wrote "Life in its fullness: Ecology, eschatology and ecomodomy in a time of climate change" for *HTS Theologies Studies/Theological Studies*; she also delivered the keynote address "Journeys Through Revelation: Apocalyptic Hope for Today" at Northeast Pennsylvania Synod Learning Ministries Day.

Michael Shelley, director emeritus of A Center of Christian-Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice (CCME), wrote "Gulian Lansing," in *Christian-Muslim Relations, A Bibliographical History*.

Mark Swanson, director of advanced studies, Harold S. Vogelaar Professor of Christian-Muslim Studies and Interfaith Relations and associate director CCME, lectured "On the Thirteenth-Century 'Golden Age' of Copto-Arabic Literature: The Case of Butrus al-Sadamanti" in a series hosted by the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen. He published *Copts in Modernity: Proceedings of the 5th International Symposium of Coptic Studies*,

Melbourne, co-authored an introduction to the volume, and wrote the essay "Printing the Medieval Copto-Arabic Heritage: From the 'Golden Age' to the Printed Page"; "Conversion to Islam under the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah," in *Conversion to Islam in the Premodern Age: A Sourcebook*.

Linda E. Thomas, professor of theology and anthropology, presented "A Womanist Perspective on Racial Justice" at the Lutheranism and Race 2020 Virtual Luther Colloquy at United Lutheran Seminary. She was also a speaker at the Women of the ELCA celebration of Black History Month event.

Sara Trumm, director of CCME, participated in the pilot Faith Over Fear virtual training by the Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign, and completed the Kaleidoscope Institute's facilitator accreditation training.

Peter Vethanayagamony's new book, *Tamil Diaspora: Intersectionality of Migration, Religion and Culture*, is currently available in India. He also wrote "Tamil Diaspora in Chicago: Its Origins, Identity, Diversity, Triumphs and Tussles."



Presenters at AAR and SBL

Several LSTC faculty and others from the community represented the seminary at the 2020 meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature in late November and early December, including:

Klaus-Peter Adam: "Enemies and Friends as Constructs in Proverbs" in the Wisdom in Israelite and Cognate Traditions section; Theme: "Proverbs and Ecclesiastes."

Andrew Guffey, auxiliary faculty: "Paul, the Pastorals, and Encratite Origins" at the SBL Disputed Paulines section, theme: "The Disputed Pauline Epistles: Current Research"; and "The Missing Image: Imagining the Divine in the Book of Revelation, Other Jewish Visionary Texts, and Their Material Environments" at the SBL John's Apocalypse and Cultural Contexts Ancient and Modern Section; theme: "Material

Culture, Place, and Space."

Barbara Rossing: SBL Ecological Hermeneutics/Contextual Biblical Interpretation section, theme: Land and Home as Threatened; "Covid-19, I Corinthians 11:29-30, and Discerning the Ecological Body of Christ; A Public Health Reading," Theme: Paul and Ecology.

Linda Thomas: panelist for the AAR "Womanist Approaches to Religion and Society Unit"; Theme: "Celebrating 30 Years of Womanist Approaches to Religion and Society: Womanist Retrospective."

Marvin Wickware, assistant professor of church and society and ethics: panelist for Cultural History of the Study of Religion Unit and Religion, Affect, and Emotion Unit Guild with the theme "I Know the Feeling: Affect in the Academic."



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“Celebrating Black Joy” was the theme of 2021 Black History Month at LSTC. All the events happened online, which enabled wide participation, sometimes more than 100 at an event. The month-long celebration, co-led by students Sharei Green and Stephen Styles, included worship with guest preachers, a lunch and learn discussing art (some of which was displayed in the Refectory, below), keynote speeches, spoken word and music, a revival, and this panel (at right), moderated by PhD student Denise Rector, on Celebrating Black Joy. LSTC had several partners, including the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, the Metro Chicago Chapter of the African Descent Lutheran Association, LSTC’s Antiracism Transformation Team, and CCME and its partners.



WINTER/SPRING 2021