

LSTC Fund for
Leaders recipients

The path of transformation
in theological education

Shaping faith and future:
Textual exploration at LSTC



epistle

WINTER 2023

The magazine of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

ANSWERING THE CALL

MDiv Student Shemiah Curry
didn't seek this journey, but
it's a call she couldn't ignore.

WOMANIST

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

2023



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epistle

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Keisha T. Dyson

MANAGING EDITOR
Rhannon Koehler

DESIGNER
Lorel K. Brown

CONTRIBUTORS
James Nieman
Keisha T. Dyson
Rhannon Koehler
Lyndsay Monsen

ON THE COVER
Shemiah Curry, MDiv student

PHOTO CREDITS
Samantha N. Adindu

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Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Consider the birds...

Think about a group you know, a really complex one. Complex groups have dense structures, varied roles, and lots of moving parts. Do you have one in mind? They aren't necessarily large, either. A school like ours is small but quite complex. Perhaps you've seen this complexity other places, too, like a family business or maybe even your church. So how does change happen in complex groups? Some say it happens only slowly, agonizingly so. It's fairly common to compare navigating change in complex groups with turning a huge ship in the open ocean. It takes miles.

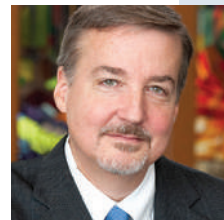
So what happened with us at LSTC? Certainly not slow change. Only one year ago at this time, we had just concluded months of negotiation to sell our former facility. We didn't yet know where we would move because we were still narrowing the list of options. Settling the terms of the lease was still ahead of us, as was the closing of the building sale. We didn't start packing until springtime and didn't move out until June. Hard to recall we hadn't yet redesigned the fourth floor or begun the construction, let alone moved into our new home. And yet today, here we are – though, to be sure, we are still arriving. But this past year was no meandering pleasure cruise.

It's not as if we now get to rest, either. There's more change ahead, much more – more basic and far larger than relocating after fifty-seven years. All this change so far has cleared our minds and stiffened our resolve to face the situation in which we and all schools like us now find ourselves. We were built for a society in which divine mystery was presumed and select values predominated. We were built for a church in which congregations had a respected voice and place in everyday life. We were built as a school to produce the leaders for that church embedded in that society, and we did that well. But all that has changed, so now we must change – and fast.

You'll hear about those changes soon, good changes about expanding the access and reach of the learning we offer, and how God's mercy, justice, and hope can be shared more widely. For the sake of our church and society, there's no time to waste. But isn't change in a seminary like turning a huge ship in the open ocean? Maybe not. If the last year taught us anything, it's that we're more agile than we thought. In fact, lately we've been looking to the skies, learning from the world around us, or as Jesus urged, "Consider the birds of the air..." Birds not only show God's providence, for which we've given thanks this past year, but also show how to change – quickly.

Have you ever seen a murmuration of starlings? That's what a group of them is called. Look online for Jan Van Ijken's film, "The Art of Flying," turn up the volume, and you'll hear why it's called that. Massive clouds of starlings, thousands upon thousands, incredibly dense, twisting and turning, slowing and speeding, all together, without collision, an utterly complex group that turns on a dime. But how? One physicist who studies this noted three key features. First, starlings gather into a tight disc, an aerodynamic shape. To us they look like a swarm, but that's an illusion. Second, that disc has more birds at the edges than the center. They are distributed to change direction, not hold course. Third, each bird flies nearly touching its neighbors to the left and right but distanced from those before or behind. Like driving on a crowded expressway near other vehicles, starlings are arranged closely and compactly to maximize both speed and safety.

What's this got to do with us? Rapid change requires complete alignment. By their structure, distribution, and arrangement, starlings execute dazzling redirection with minimal effort. In fact, a few birds at the edge of the group can direct a complete turn almost instantly. And all of this is built into their minds so they not only survive but thrive. It's this kind of alignment that we need right now to engage the major changes ahead. And this is not beyond us. In this past year and the 163 before it, we have done harder things than this. With divine gifts and common alignment, we can and will change quickly and well, oriented to whatever God now provides. You'll hear more about our big change soon. For now, though, let's just think of it as: Project Starling. 🐦



James Nieman
LSTC President

MDIV STUDENT SHEMIAH CURRY ANSWERS THE CALL

“
I THINK THE BLACK LUTHERAN PREACHER IS TRYING TO ENCOURAGE AND BUILD AND MOTIVATE THEIR AUDIENCES, ESPECIALLY IN CHICAGO WHEN IT COMES TO PREACHING IN COMMUNITIES THAT DEAL WITH VIOLENCE, ABUSE, AND THE MULTITUDE OF ISSUES BLACK PEOPLE EXPERIENCE.”

SHEMIAH CURRY

By Keisha Dyson

► **SHEMIAH CURRY’S JOURNEY TO BECOMING A SEMINARIAN WAS NOT SOMETHING SHE ACTIVELY SOUGHT, BUT A CALLING SHE COULDN’T IGNORE.** While working as a teacher in North Carolina, she reconnected with her undergraduate Bible study ministry, which had transitioned into a young adult ministry.

When the pastor leading this group sought someone to take over Bible study, Curry and her close friend were called upon for the task. Rather than shock, Curry felt a profound sense of confirmation. She had been praying and fasting, seeking guidance for her own life. It was as if this opportunity was a divine sign, aligning with her spiritual journey. This invitation marked the beginning of her path to ministry.

As she crafted her messages and teachings for young adult ministry, she began questioning

her understanding of the Bible and whether her interpretations aligned with God’s intentions. These doubts led her to seek further education and instruction to strengthen her ministry.

In January 2021, during a period of prayer and fasting, she received a clear calling from God: she was to attend seminary and become a minister. This revelation solidified her path and propelled her toward her purpose in ministry.

GROWING UP BLACK AND LUTHERAN

Curry grew up as a pastor’s kid at Shekinah Chapel in Riverdale, Illinois, which was where her faith experience was shaped. As the oldest daughter of LSTC alum Bishop Yehiel Curry and First Lady LaShonda Hicks-Curry, she was acutely aware of the sacrifices and responsibilities that came with being in ministry, including the responsibility of caring for an extended church family.

For years, Curry watched both of her parents pour themselves into ministry. In particular, she watched her mother nurture the spiritual gifts of women in the congregation and support her father in his ministry. Curry attributes her gift of pastoral storytelling in her preaching style to her father and the gift of intercession to her mother.

Reflecting on her experience growing up in the church, Curry fondly recalls the Black Lutheran church experience as “unique and joyful,” defying the conventional perception of church life.

For starters, Sunday service at Shekinah Chapel began at 5 p.m. It was a lively place where young families gathered with their children—the evening start time allowed Curry and her friends to embark on adventures before church. They would spend mornings at the mall and visiting friends.

Sunday night, however, was dedicated to worship. Poetry and praise dance were



WOMANIST

HOLY BIBLE



interwoven into the fabric of church services, creating a unique sense of spiritual engagement. The atmosphere was charged with powerful sermons and singing that moved people to their feet, into the aisles, and sometimes even to the altar, where congregants would stand or kneel with their hands raised in a sign of surrender to God. The church started small, but its pews eventually overflowed because of the powerful preaching and worship experience.

This is where Curry felt at home and where she first fell in love with God. What she loves most about

her Black Lutheran church identity is how it draws African spirituality, modern music, and freedom of expression into the worship experience.

As Curry's church community expanded and evolved, it ventured into new territories. Leadership Lab, a summer camp where Lutheran children from Illinois gathered, became a significant part of her high school years. It even connected her with children from Atlanta, forging lasting friendships and bridging gaps between different church communities.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Now, as a third-year MDiv student at LSTC, Curry's theology is deeply rooted in Womanist Theology, a form of reflection that places the religious and moral perspectives of Black women at the center of its method. Through this lens, issues of class, gender (including sex, sexism, sexuality, and sexual exploitation), and race are seen as theological problems.

For Curry, the core of her ministry is to create an oasis where everyone can experience the presence of God without fear or shame. In this spiritual haven, she envisions a church filled

with vibrant praise and worship through music and instrumental sessions. She also dreams of creating a tiny house community for the unhoused, offering reduced-cost housing and providing activities tailored to seniors, including fitness classes and social gatherings.

Furthermore, Curry envisions her church adopting a local school, ensuring that the surrounding community knows they are loved and supported through prayers and tangible assistance, such as providing snacks for teachers or organizing back-to-school events.



Curry carries a profound belief that God shows up in the image of every individual. She embraces a theology rooted in inclusivity and liberation, emphasizing that no one should be placed on a pedestal or excluded from the love and acceptance of God. While her theology centers on Black women, it also extends to the well-being and liberation of all who face oppression.

"I think Black Lutherans preach differently than white Lutherans. Black preachers bring their cultural experience and their traditions, and it is my observation that we

have more at stake," said Curry. "I think the Black Lutheran preacher is trying to encourage and build and motivate their audiences, especially in Chicago when it comes to preaching in communities that deal with violence, abuse and the multitude of issues Black people experience."

She believes that all people, regardless of their background, are made in the image of God and should be represented in a way that reflects their inherent value and holiness.

Regarding the structure of her church, Curry believes that while outreach efforts

are essential, maintaining the routine of Sunday worship holds significance for many. She sees the power in structure and routine. "It can be comforting," Curry said. "Routine helps individuals stay balanced and connected to their faith community."

In considering the journey ahead, Curry understands the challenges she will face, especially regarding societal expectations and questions about her role in relationships. However, she is determined to pursue a path that allows her to fulfill her calling to minister to Black women and all women without compromise. ✝

FAR LEFT: The Youth Ministry at Shekinah Chapel where Shemiah and her sister, Shekinah, are the co-leaders.

TOP CENTER: Shemiah with a group of volunteers at the 2015 MYLE event in Detroit, MI.

TOP RIGHT: Shemiah and her family at her father's installation as Bishop in 2019. (L to R) Shemiah Curry; her mother LaShonda Hicks-Curry; her father Yehiel Curry; and her sisters, Ashirah and Shekinah Curry.

BOTTOM LEFT: Shemiah serving as a YAGM volunteer in Rwanda in 2016.

BOTTOM CENTER: Shemiah and her father, Bishop Curry, visiting the Holy Land in April 2023.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Shemiah at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference in February 2023 with African Decent leaders in the ELCA.

THE POWER OF SUPPORT

ELCA scholarships fuel success of
LSTC Fund for Leaders recipients

By Rhiannon Koehler

FINANCIAL SUPPORT PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE IN PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS' ABILITY TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON THEIR CALL AND PURSUE A CAREER IN MINISTRY AND SERVICE. This is especially true for the inspiring scholars who are embarking on the first year of their MDiv programs at LSTC in academic year 2023–2024.

These students are

supported by the ELCA's Fund For Leaders program, which offers full-tuition scholarships to support students attending ELCA seminaries who intend on becoming a rostered minister of either word and sacrament or word and service. The program also serves as an important way for participants to build community and engage in mentorship. As Senior Director of Major Gifts for Lutheran World relief and LSTC Board of Directors member

ADDY STUEVER: EMPOWERING RURAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH MINISTRY

FOR ADDY STUEVER, THE PATH TO MINISTRY WAS INFLUENCED BY HER DEEP-ROOTED PASSION FOR JUSTICE.

Despite considering a career in politics, she realized that she wanted to continue learning and engage with communities directly through a career in ministry. After some research, it became clear that LSTC, a seminary that aligned with her justice-oriented values, was the perfect fit.

With the support of her family and the guidance of her great aunt Joan, who introduced her to the ELCA Fund for Leaders program, Stuever was awarded a full-tuition scholarship to attend LSTC. This support enabled her to begin seminary immediately after completing her undergraduate studies and pursue her vision of being a rural pastor, building centers that serve as hubs for all members of the community. 🌱

“

WHEN I TOLD MY AUNT I WAS APPLYING TO SEMINARY, SHE SAID, ‘THERE’S PROBABLY A LOT OF SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE. I JUST DONATED TO THE FUND FOR LEADERS. YOU SHOULD DEFINITELY CHECK IT OUT.’”

ADDY STUEVER



DeWayne A. Cook notes, “The Fund for Leaders (FFL) has had a transformative impact on the experience of MDiv students, creating invaluable opportunities for growth, connection, and investment in their learning journey... [Furthermore, FFL] students engage in a letter exchange with their donors every six months for four years, allowing them to develop a profound connection over time. This process fosters understanding of each other’s

values and provides a platform for sharing personal growth and learning experiences.”

Four remarkable recipients of the 2023–2024 scholarship, Addy Stuever, Hannah Peterson, Leah Berdahl, and Madelyn Anderson, exemplify the transformative impact of donor support in their pursuit of ministry and justice. With their unique backgrounds and passions, they highlight the importance of financial and community support, especially the

support of the ELCA, in shaping their success at LSTC.

These scholars exemplify the promise of tomorrow’s leaders in the ELCA: leaders who embrace cross-generational experiences, fight for social justice, choose compassion, and act to bring members of their communities together in joyful association for a more just world. The success of these students will better not only their future congregations and

those who they reach through their ministry, but also the ELCA at large. As Cook says, “The FFL has made a remarkable difference to the future of the ELCA. It has connected MDiv students with Churchwide leaders, fostered relationships between students and donors, influenced the values and engagement of future leaders within the ELCA, and provided financial support that enables students to fully invest in their learning journey.” 🌱



LEAH BERDAHL: NURTURING CROSS-GENERATIONAL MINISTRY

▶ LEAH BERDAHL'S JOURNEY TOWARDS A CAREER IN MINISTRY BEGAN THROUGH HER WORK AT SHETEK LUTHERAN MINISTRIES.

Witnessing the power of cross-generational ministry and community building, Berdahl discovered her calling to merge leadership skills, vocation, and faith in ministry. LSTC's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice resonated with her, as did the welcoming and compassionate nature of the LSTC community. Overcoming initial concerns about being a young, queer, and female voice in ministry, Berdahl found support from her synod Bishop and received the ELCA Fund for Leaders scholarship.

This financial and community support empowers Berdahl to pursue her passion for campus ministry and become a guiding presence for others. 🌿

MADELYN ANDERSON: EMBRACING THE CALL FOR INCLUSIVE MINISTRY

FOR MADELYN ANDERSON, THE PATH TO LSTC WAS ONE OF DISCOVERY AND GROWTH. Raised in a tradition that didn't ordain women, Anderson's outlook changed when she encountered a female

pastor at a retreat. This experience opened her eyes to new possibilities and led her to explore ELCA Lutheranism.

At LSTC, Anderson found a community that shared her vision of LGBTQIA+ inclusion and justice. The ELCA Fund for Leaders scholarship, which she learned about from fellow

students, provided her with the financial means to pursue her passion wholeheartedly. This support, to Anderson, signifies that she is not alone on her journey and that the ELCA stands behind her, enabling her to focus on her studies and make a difference in her community. 🌿



“

THE MORE I REFLECT ON THE SCHOLARSHIP, THE MORE I THINK HOW IT SIGNALS THAT I HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE CHURCH BEHIND ME AND THAT I'M NOT ALONE IN THIS. IT SHOWS THAT THE ELCA CARES, AND THE FUND FOR LEADERS ALUMNI CARE, AND I AM HELD ULTIMATELY BY THIS BEAUTIFUL COMMUNITY.”

MADELYN ANDERSON

HANNAH PETERSON: FINDING GOD IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

HANNAH PETERSON'S JOURNEY TO LSTC STARTED WITH A CAREER IN THE MILITARY. During her time in the Army, she discovered the importance of faith and experienced her call to ministry. Peterson's experiences during a tour of duty in Korea where she witnessed both loneliness and the widespread need for a supportive faith-based community, solidified her decision to pursue ministry upon the completion of her service.

LSTC, with its justice-oriented academic offerings and the opportunity for distance learning, offered her the ideal platform to combine her passion for ministry with her desire to make a positive impact. The ELCA Fund for Leaders scholarship provided Peterson with the financial freedom to pursue her MDiv degree and the necessary support for her to work towards becoming a compassionate campus minister. 🌿

YOU CAN BE PART OF DIRECT STUDENT SUPPORT

WHILE ELCA SUPPORT IS CRUCIAL to the success of students at LSTC, the Fund for Leaders scholarship provides only for tuition; not housing or living expenses. LSTC also offers direct support for students attending our seminary through the Visionary Scholarship Fund, a core institutional program that provides support for additional related academic expenses; the new Emerging Leaders Fund, which puts donor dollars directly to use to support tuition and related expenses for students of color and for students from historically underrepresented communities; and the Advanced Studies Global Leaders Fund, which holistically supports PhD students. To make a gift in support of LSTC students please email advancement@lstc.edu or visit lstc.edu/giving/scholarships. 🌿



WALKING THE PATH OF TRANSFORMATION IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Follow LSTC alum Dr. Agustina Luvis-Nunez's journey from a Petecostal Sunday school teacher in Puerto Rico to an esteemed professor and advocate

By Rhiannon Koehler

IN THE WORLD OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION, THERE ARE INDIVIDUALS WHOSE STORIES INSPIRE AND ILLUMINATE THE PATH FOR OTHERS. DR. AGUSTINA LUVIS-NÚÑEZ IS ONE SUCH LUMINARY.

A passionate educator and scholar who has broadened the field of feminist-Latina-womanist theology and postcolonial theologies, Dr. Luvis-Núñez's journey from a Pentecostal upbringing in Puerto Rico to becoming a Professor and Academic Dean at the Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico is nothing short of remarkable. Dr. Luvis-Núñez earned a BS in Biology and Medical Technology from the University of Puerto Rico, an MDiv from the Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico and her ThM '03 and PhD '09 degrees at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Since graduating, she has become a leader in advocating for transformational theology in worship settings and an advocate for justice and equality for all in her home context of Puerto Rico.

Dr. Luvis-Núñez's story began not with a desire to work in pastoral care, but instead with a deep-seated desire to teach. Growing up in a Pentecostal church, she was always drawn to working with children and youth, particularly in Sunday school. Soon, she also worked with young adults. "I knew that I needed a more formal theological education to do this," Luvis-Núñez says, "but theological education was not an option for a poor Black young woman who had to study but also to work as soon as possible to help sustain her family." Luvis-Núñez's determination to fulfill her responsibilities led her to study medical technology and biology and then to work in a medical lab for many years. However, her desire for theological education persisted.

One day, after a workshop for Sunday school teachers, one of the professors pulled Luvis-Núñez aside. "She told me that I had a call from God and that God was in charge of everything...she said, 'the doors will open more for you, and all you have to do is be

confident, because this is God's will for you.'" Soon, on the advice of a friend, Luvis-Núñez began taking classes at the Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico. Soon, she had taken all of the requirements for an MDiv. Her professors asked her what her plans were post-graduation and she remarked, "I loved this experience, and I will go back to my church to be a better Sunday school teacher."

Luvis-Núñez's journey took an unexpected turn, however, when a friend introduced her to the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Intrigued by the curriculum and courses offered, she decided to explore this new opportunity. Reflecting on her decision, she says, "I didn't know about this seminary because in my church, pastors didn't come to a seminary. They have their own institutional education for the pastors and for their teachers." However, the welcoming environment and the courses at LSTC resonated with her, leading her to submit an application. LSTC was the only school she applied to. She was accepted

with a full scholarship, but still worried about other costs of attendance. How to make ends meet in an expensive city like Chicago?

For a while, Luvis-Núñez thought that she might not be able to take her place with the ThM graduates of 2003 because of financial hurdles. She applied to a promising external scholarship, but it fell through. Then, a surprise conversation with her boss at the medical lab where she had worked for 21 years changed everything. "She [was] a member of my church, and she knew everything," Luvis-Núñez recalls. "And she said, 'we are ready to help you. If you decide to go to Chicago to study, the laboratory will help you with a scholarship...you have been working with us for twenty years, and we are very grateful for that, and we are going to help you.'" Thanks to the generous support of her additional scholarship, Luvis-Núñez was able to pay for housing and food and, even more remarkably, was able to keep the medical and health benefits she had from her time at the lab as she embarked on her new journey.

Luis-Núñez's experience at LSTC was marked by warmth and support, even during challenging times. Her arrival coincided with the tragic events of 9/11, which left her initially questioning her decision to stay. However, the outpouring of support from faculty and the community helped her find a sense of belonging. She describes the professors who invited her to their homes and the overall sense of community as instrumental in making her feel at home.

During her time at LSTC, while first earning her ThM and then her PhD, Luis-Núñez's academic interests began to take shape. She developed a passion for feminist theology and an acute awareness of the link between colonialism and Christian faith in the Caribbean context. Her coursework and interactions with professors opened her eyes to the intersection of theology and social justice, a theme that would become central to her work. She was also an important leader in the institution during her time as a student. In fact, she was appointed as the interim director of the Hispanic Ministry Program at LSTC, a historic moment as she became the first non-Lutheran and the first woman to hold the position.

Even before she graduated with her PhD from LSTC in 2009 she was recruited by her former institution to come back and teach. She has taught a wide variety of topics to an expansive student audience but remains especially interested in using her work to promote social justice. "I'm very interested in the link between colonialism and the Christian faith, and Christian violence against women and the Church because the Caribbean was marked by

violence, hunger for wealth, power, and dominion that featured in the European colonial enterprise of the 15th century," she says, noting that the reverberations of that violence continue to leave their marks on society today. Her courses, including Caribbean theology, explore the impact of colonialism and the role of the church in perpetuating or challenging systemic injustices. She passionately advocates for justice, particularly in areas of gender, race, and socio-economic inequality, within both the Christian and secular spheres.

Reflecting on her transformative journey, Luis-Núñez acknowledges the crucial role that LSTC played in shaping her academic and theological perspective. "I recommend

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I'M VERY INTERESTED IN THE LINK BETWEEN COLONIALISM AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, AND CHRISTIAN VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THE CHURCH BECAUSE THE CARIBBEAN WAS MARKED BY VIOLENCE, HUNGER FOR WEALTH, POWER, AND DOMINION THAT FEATURED IN THE EUROPEAN COLONIAL ENTERPRISE OF THE 15TH CENTURY.”

DR. AGUSTINA LUIS-NÚÑEZ

LSTC because LSTC prepared me for this...the ecumenical and interreligious experience was determining for me," she says. The institution's openness to diverse voices and its commitment to social justice advocacy helped lay the foundation for her work in challenging systemic oppression, which continues today.

Dr. Agustina Luis-Núñez's journey from a Pentecostal Sunday school teacher in Puerto Rico to an esteemed

professor and advocate for justice is a testament to her resilience, determination, and unwavering commitment to her calling. Her experience at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago not only equipped her with the academic tools needed to address complex theological and social issues but also instilled in her a passion for transformative ministry in the Caribbean context. As she continues to teach and advocate for justice, Luis-

Núñez serves as an inspiring example of the impact one individual can have on theological education and the pursuit of a more just and equitable world. And to women who wish to follow in her footsteps, she has a message: "I will say to any woman, please start walking towards your goal. Don't feel that you cannot do this...we need to continue walking because God gives us the strength to do what we want to do. Don't give up." ❁



A CAREER OF NURTURING

By Rhiannon Koehler

Former Chair of the LSTC Board of Directors and Emeritus Member of the LSTC Foundation Board of Trustees Roger Lewis is committed to elevating LSTC's mission, vision, and values



ROGER LEWIS' PATH TOWARDS PHILANTHROPIC LEADERSHIP AT LSTC WAS FIRST AND FOREMOST FOSTERED BY HIS DAUGHTER, ALUMNI BOARD MEMBER AND FOUNDATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEMBER CARRIE LEWIS LA PLANTE (MDIV 2004; DMIN 2015). For La Plante, LSTC proved to be a place of profound personal development. "My time at LSTC was a time of significant growth as much of my life and ministry were

shaped there," La Plante says. "I also believe that LSTC has a unique voice among the seminaries in the ELCA, and I feel that it is important for that voice to continue to speak loudly and clearly into both the Church and the world."

For Lewis, his daughter's words reflect his own deep commitment to elevating the mission, vision, and values of LSTC through philanthropy. Lewis' commitment to raising significant funds for causes that he believes have a transformative power in our world started decades ago. With a background in marketing and public relations, Lewis recognized the symbiotic relationship

between his professional pursuits and philanthropy. "If you're involved [in public relations], you become involved in community relations," he notes. His experiences providing key support to various organizations in Nebraska solidified his commitment to fostering community engagement through philanthropy. As the landscape of educational funding shifted, Lewis identified the crucial role philanthropy played in the survival of seminaries and higher education institutions.

"Philanthropy has become increasingly important to the Churchwide organization and individual organizations

NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

Learning communities take flight under Lane Lewis' leadership

By Rhiannon Koehler

FOR LANE LEWIS, BUILDING FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY HAS ALWAYS BEEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF HIS PRIORITIES. Lane and his wife, Johanna, were members of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Naperville, Illinois, for twenty-seven years and now Trinity Lutheran in Greenville, South Carolina for the past two years, experiences that have been rich in a multitude of ways. In fact, it was a personal connection from Our Saviour's, Randy Schneider, who recruited Lewis

to join the LSTC Foundation Board of Trustees in 2019.

"I really did think about [joining the Foundation Board] as an opportunity to give back to the larger Church," Lewis says. Working with the Foundation Board offered opportunities to address the problems that churches of many denominations are facing, including declining enrollment and disengagement. "I wanted to potentially help reverse some of those trends and

generate growth and giving for the Church as well," Lewis says of his goals upon his appointment to the LSTC Foundation Board.

Once in place, Lewis was selected to Chair the Churchwide Relations Task Force on the LSTC Foundation Board, now colloquially known as the Learning Communities Task Force, a role he holds to this day. The task force proved, from the start, to be a locus of inspiration. Together with LSTC alums, other

foundation trustees, and two ELCA bishops, Lewis quickly found himself at the helm of proposing a new way to help LSTC rethink community engagement, continuing Lutheran education, and the Lutheran formation process. The resultant project, which has now been piloted for two years, has come to be known as Learning Communities.

"It's churchwide community engagement grounded in Lutheran theology that really creates

PHILANTHROPY AT LSTC

within Churchwide,” Lewis observes. Over time, as enrollment and engagement has declined and traditional funding streams waned, institutions were compelled to chart their own financial destinies, emphasizing the need for robust philanthropic programs. For institutions of higher education, people with skill sets like Lewis’ became increasingly important to the long-term success of programmatic and academic initiatives.

Lewis’ journey with LSTC took a major turn in 2003, when he joined the LSTC Board of Directors. “At my second meeting as a board member, I was elected board chair,” he recalls, noting his rapid ascent into leadership with a chuckle. Over the next decade, Lewis’ service encompassed various roles, including chair of the Administration and Finance

Committee. However, it was the financial crisis of 2008–2009 that truly put his mettle to the test.

With the stock market’s precipitous fall threatening LSTC’s endowment-based finances, Lewis took on a defining role as chair of a special finance task force. This group, consisting of board and staff leadership, rallied to rescue the seminary from financial turmoil, meticulously crafting a plan to restore its fiscal health. “My role was to provide direction to the group on our progress,” Lewis explains. He consistently engaged stakeholders, ensuring transparency during the tough decisions that had to be made. The initiative culminated in a successful restoration of LSTC’s financial stability,

a testament to Lewis’ leadership and the power of a united community. “We developed a plan that allowed the seminary to continue to operate,” Lewis reflects now with gratitude.

The recent years saw Lewis’ collaboration with fellow Foundation Board of Trustees Member Sarah Stegemoeller, an effort that successfully reinvigorated former board members’ engagement and promoted increasing awareness of LSTC. “We developed a program to reengage former board members,” Lewis shares. By building connections and nurturing shared enthusiasm, they successfully increased the organization’s scholarship funds, making seminary education more accessible to all.

As Lewis reflects on his legacy at LSTC,

he emphasizes the quintessential role of philanthropy in driving organizational progress. He advocates for an assertive approach to fundraising, suggesting that “developing programs that steward existing and new donors” is key. Upon his recent retirement from the foundation, Lewis’ journey of leadership and philanthropy continues. His counsel for those following his footsteps is pragmatic yet profound: cultivate passion, embrace leadership roles, commit time and resources, and remain open to change. Finally, as he says, “enjoy the ride.” After all, philanthropy is not just about giving, but about enriching the very fabric of higher education, our global community, and our shared experiences. 🌱



an inspiring environment for members of different congregations to learn together [and] to fulfill these unsatisfied appetites for faith formation,” Lewis says. For the first year, Learning Communities, which is offered at no cost to participants, tested both in-person and virtual programming, and

centered theological education programs in different geographic locations to build stronger relationships between LSTC and its constituent congregations.

Early reviews were overwhelmingly positive: parishioners enjoyed having the opportunity to engage with LSTC faculty, thought leaders, and subject matter experts who they may not have had access to in the course of their regular activities. They also enjoyed the interactivity that Learning Communities programming provided. However, one element stuck out: participants in the virtual programs found incredible value in connecting with other, geographically disparate congregations. That finding led

Lewis and LSTC Foundation Board leaders to pivot and construct future Learning Communities series as entirely virtual offerings that could be attended by anyone with an interest in the subject matter at hand as long as they were able to join via Zoom.

In the 2023–2024 academic year, Learning Communities at LSTC will offer three four-part series exploring topics of “Faith, Work, and Economics,” guided by Bishop Emeritus Rev. Wayne N. Miller, “Theological Intersectionality for the 21st Century Church” led by LSTC Professor of Theology and Anthropology Dr. Linda E. Thomas, and “Liturgy and the Natural World,” directed by Rev. Dr. Benjamin M. Stewart,

who serves as Distinguished Affiliate Faculty at LSTC.

Lewis and his team on the LSTC Foundation Board look forward to more success as the program unfolds. “In the last series we did in April, we had 410 people registered,” Lewis said. “We hope to move Learning Communities from a taskforce supported program to an institutionally embedded program,” Lewis says, “because everyone at LSTC shares our vision and our passion for supporting the Church.” 🌱

For more information on Learning Communities at LSTC please visit lsc.edu/learningcommunities.

FAITH, LEADERSHIP, AND BUILDING COMMUNITY

By Keisha Dyson

► GROWING UP LUTHERAN ON CHICAGO'S SOUTH SIDE, GREG LEWIS, MDIV '07 HAS LONG FOLLOWED A PATH OF INTELLECTUAL AND ETHICAL EXPLORATION. His journey to becoming an LSTC alum and the vice chairperson of the LSTC Board of Directors (BOD) is a testament to his passion for learning and deep commitment to serving the Church.

From the time Lewis was a child, his parents instilled in him the importance and value of education and faith in God. As an educator, Lewis's mom knew that attending the best schools mattered and always sought out and guided her children toward the best academic opportunities. Lewis's mom grew up in Bronzeville in the 1940s, but when it was time to raise her children, she wanted a better neighborhood and better-quality schools, so they moved further south to the Chatham neighborhood just four blocks away from the home of famed gospel singer Mahalia Jackson.

"When my parents bought their first house, the practice of housing segregation was

deeply embedded in Chicago," said Lewis. "[Integration] was really considered to be something that just wasn't done. [Segregation] was the rule of the day."

This was during the 1960s at a time in Chicago and in America's history when racist housing policies like redlining, racially restrictive covenants, and blockbusting were in full effect as part of a broader system of housing discrimination and segregation that has since shaped the city's demographic, economic, and social landscape.

When the Lewis family and other African American families moved into the Chatham neighborhood, white families were persuaded to sell their property cheaply because they feared living amongst Blacks, leading to the phenomena known as white flight. For many Chicago neighborhoods in the 1960s, this turnover generally led to property and neighborhood decline. But in Chatham, residents fought and succeeded in forming a solid black middle-class enclave that survived for nearly half a century.

This is where Lewis grew up, and in this community

his faith was formed under the leadership of renowned pastor Rev. Robin Skiles at St. James Lutheran Church. Lewis served as an acolyte for the church, carrying incense at the start of liturgy, and while other children played during Sunday school, he took the messages so seriously that he was asked to teach a class at the tender age of 12.

Thinking back on his experiences, Lewis reflected, "As a child and adolescent I struggled with finding a rational explanation for white flight. Of course years later I realize that racism and bigotry simply are not rational. In recent years I have thought more carefully and studied the reparations movement as a path toward a more unified and loving society."

THE ROAD TO LSTC

After completing his bachelor's degree and embarking on a successful football career at Oberlin College, Lewis attended law school at Northwestern University and became an attorney in the private and public sectors for nearly three decades. He served as a race relations attorney for the Legal Assistance Foundation, tackled

trade issues on behalf of the Federal Trade Commission, and dealt with matters related to healthcare fraud and abuse for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

In the midst of this success, Lewis continued to be drawn towards leadership positions within various Lutheran churches. He held roles such as president of church councils, where his experience and education served him well in making informed decisions and providing guidance to his congregations.

Still, with a background in law, a successful career at HHS, and having a family and children to raise, Lewis might not have seemed like the typical candidate for theological education. However, his passion for faith and the gospel called, and in the early 2000s, Lewis enrolled as a part-time student at LSTC.

Balancing work, family, and his studies was challenging, but Lewis and his wife made it work. Lewis delved into history, theology, and biblical interpretation despite his many responsibilities. His passion for learning in these classes was inspired by intellectual curiosity and a desire to explore the complexities of faith. His motivation was not to enter parish ministry but to find other ways to serve the Church.

Although law and theology may seem like very different professions, Lewis believes the skills needed for each profession share commonalities. Both attorneys and theologians must engage in rigorous critical thinking; they must interpret texts, grapple with ethical dilemmas, communicate effectively, be skilled researchers, and engage

with and advocate for their communities. His experiences as a lawyer honed his skills in ethical decision-making and the art of persuasion, which he found applicable in ministry and theological education.

In 2007, Lewis completed a Master of Divinity degree and continued to work as an attorney, never realizing that his theological education would eventually lead him back to LSTC in another role.

SERVING ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AT LSTC

In 2021, when Bishop Yehiel Curry recommended that LSTC alum Greg Lewis serve as a Board of Directors (BOD) member, Lewis jumped at the chance. He believes in the importance of effective governance and sees the board's role as one of oversight and guidance rather than micromanaging an institution.

As a member of the BOD, Lewis brings his legal and theological training and his love for LSTC, ensuring that the institution's challenges are met with a thoughtful, informed, and considerate approach.

As a member of the Anti-Racism Transformation Team, Lewis is determined to address racial injustice within the institution. His experiences growing up Black in segregated Chicago have made him aware of the realities of racism, and he approaches the work with an open mind and a dedication to change.

Lewis is also a key member of the Reparations Task Force, a working group of the BOD responsible for examining and proposing a reparations plan for the seminary. Drawing on his legal background, Lewis has researched various

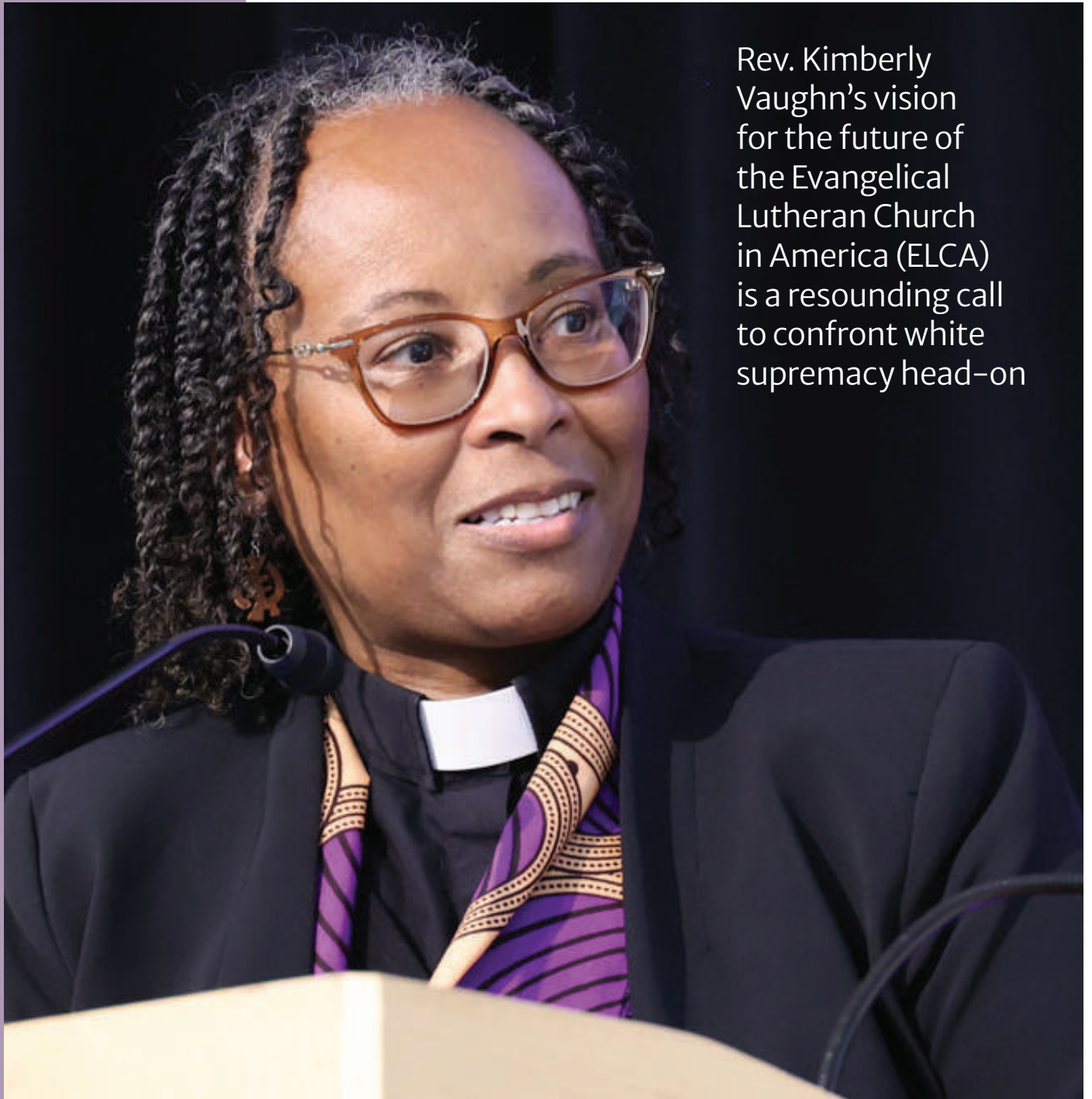


definitions and forms of reparations, helping the group to seek just and ethical ways to address past wrongs.

As Lewis continues to serve on the BOD and contribute to the transformation of LSTC, he remains a steadfast advocate for education, ethics,

and justice. Looking ahead, Lewis says that he believes LSTC has the opportunity to be a leader in theological education. "We are involved in an historical move," he says. "God has a much brighter future ahead for us, and I want to be a part of that plan." ❁

JUSTICE, FAITH, AND INCLUSION



Rev. Kimberly Vaughn's vision for the future of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is a resounding call to confront white supremacy head-on

By Rhiannon Koehler

► **REV. KIMBERLY VAUGHN'S
PATH TO LEADERSHIP**

**IN THE ELCA BEGAN AS
A CHILD WHEN SHE WAS
STEEPED IN THE RICH
CULTURAL TAPESTRY OF
CLEVELAND, OHIO.** As the youngest child of a Baptist minister who later embraced Lutheranism, Rev. Vaughn was no stranger to open conversations about religion in her home context. Even after her father became Lutheran, Rev. Vaughn's mother remained Baptist; the fusion of faith traditions shaped her formative years, nurturing deep questions about existence that would unknowingly lead her toward theological exploration. "I began to question the universe, seeking understanding, not realizing these were theological questions," she remembers. But it wasn't until her Lutheran church's pastor began addressing these inquiries and members of her community started directly encouraging her towards pastoral work that she felt a pull toward ministry.

Her ecclesiastical journey carried her through youth and outdoor ministry before burnout prompted a shift to a corporate legal role. But divine intervention came calling when her friend persuaded her to visit a seminary in California. "God is funny," Rev. Vaughn says today with a laugh. The trip proved to be formative; the fire ignited in her gut during that visit was unmistakable. As a result, Rev. Vaughn returned to Cleveland, completed her college degree in history, and

embarked on a path of urban ministry, culminating in her enrollment at LSTC.

In her seminary years, Rev. Vaughn confronted the stark realities of institutional racism head-on, an experience that left an indelible mark on her journey. "I was surprised by that, and I didn't expect that in a place like Chicago," she admits. However, she also found some solace. First, Rev. Vaughn's work as a leader in campus ministry settings, outdoor ministry, and student ministry was honored by the ELCA through the Fund for Leaders scholarship, a merit-based full-tuition scholarship for future pastors and rostered lay leaders studying at ELCA seminaries. She also found support in her mentor, Dr. Linda Thomas. Finally, by her second semester, she had the camaraderie of fellow Black students, whose friendship fortified her against the storm.

Rev. Vaughn's experience during Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) in the Level 1 Trauma Unit at Advocate Christ Hospital proved to be a pivotal moment for Rev. Vaughn, one which she now identifies as her resolute call to ministry. This epiphany crystallized her path. "That's when I felt called to the work," she says today.

While the realities of institutional and direct racism during her time at LSTC proved to be challenging, Rev. Vaughn had the unwavering support of her home congregation, making the candidacy process relatively stress-free. Upon ordination, Rev. Vaughn was resolute in catalyzing change within the church. She recognized the pressing need to break

down the barriers of white supremacy that hindered genuine inclusion. "We've got to get back to having things that are... built on a foundation that is fully inclusive and affirming and equitable for all people," she emphasizes.

During a call to serve as an associate pastor in Texas, Rev. Vaughn observed the same institutional racism she had faced in Chicago. She felt she had to make a choice to commit to her values. "I couldn't be there and be fully supportive and an ally to my queer friends and family members," she says. "I couldn't be there authentically."

Eager to influence change from a new vantage point, Rev. Vaughn transitioned into leadership roles, eventually joining the Churchwide organization. Her current role as the Senior Director of Discipleship and Inclusive Communities empowers her to instill the values of belonging and equality across various ministries.

Rev. Vaughn acknowledges that her current role has allowed her a uniquely valuable position when it comes to assessing some of the most significant contemporary challenges that the church faces today; namely, declining enrollment and engagement. Her work, as she says, is focused on "getting ministries within the ELCA and our domestic

sphere to collaborate together and support each other."

With areas of focus including discipleship ministries, faith formation, deaf ministry, disability ministry, economic diversity, outdoor ministries, and community organizing, Rev. Vaughn is committed to meeting members of the community where they are at and challenging historicized ministries that exclude members on the basis of their race, identity, or ability.

Rev. Vaughn's vision for the future of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is a resounding call to confront white supremacy

head-on. "We've got to stop making excuses... that allow that and condone it," she says. Her unwavering commitment to building truly inclusive communities echoes her commitment to living out the values of the gospel in her daily life.

Rev. Kimberly Vaughn's journey

is a testament to the power of conviction, the strength of community, and the enduring potential of the Church to be a center of radical love and acceptance. In a world rife with division, her story is a beacon of hope and a call to action for a more inclusive faith. As she continues to work passionately toward her vision, she reminds us that true faith can thrive, even when faced with the most challenging circumstances. 🌱

“
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REV. KIMBERLY VAUGHN

As an anti-racist institution, LSTC recognizes that there are moments in our history when we did not act according to our values. By elevating the experiences of alumni like Reverend Vaughn, we are taking the crucial first step in recognizing the harms of structural racism that permeate our institution. From this recognition, we are promoting a re-examination and re-evaluation of our institutional impact. Though we cannot reverse what has happened in the past, we can and will engage in the necessary work of recommitting to institutional justice to ensure an equitable experience for people of color within the LSTC community.

LSTC students visit the Mecca Center in Willowbrook, Ill.



New Student Orientation



Ken Sawyer, Professor of Church History at McCormick Theological Seminary, speaking at the LSTC 2023 Scherer Lecture.



Pastor to the Community Erik Christensen and MDiv student Shemiah Curry.



Dawn Newman of Charles Vincent George Architects and Heather Curtis of Strategic Plan Advisors, LLC, speak to the LSTC Board of Directors about change.



LSTC President James Nieman speaking at the Connect on Cornell alumni event.



LSTC community members take part in the 2023 Interfaith Alley Tour.



Scott Chalmers, Dean of Student Services, gives new students a tour of the CTU building.



LSTC faculty members speak to the alumni during the Connect on Cornell event.



LSTC students enjoy the seminary's new space.



LSTC alumni gather for the first time in our new home.

Dean Esther Menn, center, at the introduction to faculty.



LSTC students attending chapel on Reformation Day.



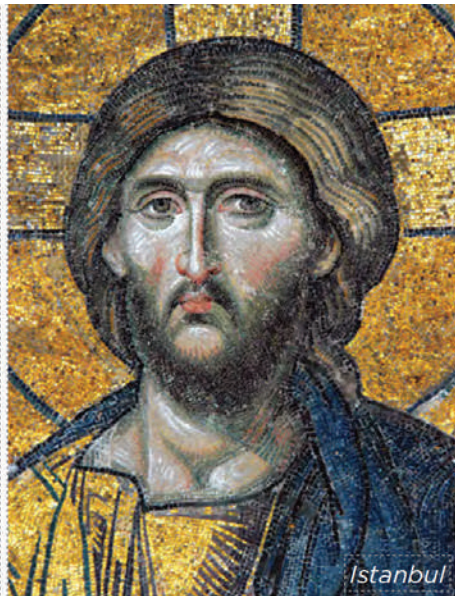


Lutheran School of
Theology *at* Chicago

JOIN LSTC ON A PILGRIMAGE OF A LIFETIME



Blue Mosque



Istanbul



Ephesus

From May 21st-June 6th 2024, you are invited to embark on a spiritual journey like no other with LSTC! Join us for a once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to Greece and Turkey and immerse yourself in the rich tapestry of Biblical history.

Walk in the footsteps of ancient legends, discovering the roots of your faith. Our expert guides, Dr. Barbara Rossing and Dr. Esther Menn of LSTC, will lead you through iconic sites, from the stunning landscapes of Greece to the historic wonders of Turkey. Unearth the stories that shaped our world. Don't miss this chance to explore, learn, and connect on a profound level.

Confirmations and \$200 per-person deposits are due January 15th, 2024, with full payment due February 20, 2024. Reserve your spot now and let your faith come to life with LSTC!

Learn more at:

<https://tutku.travel/tour/greece-and-turkey-barbara-rossing-and-esther-menn-lutheran-school-of-theology>

Register now at:

www.tutku.travel/tour/2024LSTCMAY



SCAN FOR DETAILS



LEADERSHIP IN A TIME OF CHANGE

LSTC Board Chair Terry Goff: “I have always regarded serving in church leadership as a natural response to the call of action associated with faith”

By Keisha Dyson

IN 2018, TERRY GOFF WAS WRAPPING UP SERVICE ON THE ELCA'S CENTRAL/ SOUTHERN ILLINOIS SYNOD COUNCIL WHEN A NEW OPPORTUNITY ARRIVED. The synod's bishop, Reverend John Roth, asked Goff if he would consider becoming the Synod representative on the board of directors for the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

Then newly retired, Goff saw this role as an opportunity to leverage the wealth of experience



and skills he had earned in corporate America and various leadership positions within the Church and immediately embraced the idea.

"I have always regarded serving in church leadership as a natural response to the call of action associated with faith," said Goff. "I've been on church councils, served on a program cabinet for Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, and in other service roles in congregations since I was 17. It's just something that has become a natural part of my life."

Goff's Lutheran roots trace back to his maternal

grandmother of German descent. Although he was baptized as an Episcopalian, during his eighth-grade year a family relocation back to his hometown of Peoria in 1962 prompted Goff's parents to seek out the local Lutheran church. That year, Goff was confirmed into the Lutheran faith at Grace Lutheran Church, a predecessor congregation of today's Grace and Peace Lutheran Church, where he remains a member.

Growing up in central Illinois, Goff attended the University of Illinois at Springfield and Bradley University in Peoria, where he spent nearly the first decade of his professional career in broadcast journalism. Goff says having the foundation of his career begin as a street reporter, assignment editor, and producer for the evening news broadcast at a local network-affiliate television and radio station gave him invaluable skills, experiences, and a mindset that set the stage for his future endeavors.

"You don't think of Peoria as the hub of international communications, and it isn't, but there is that old saying about Peoria, 'Will it play in Peoria?' It dates back to the vaudeville era and was popularized by Bob Haldeman from Nixon's administration because, at the time, Peoria was a fairly accurate test market for the nation."

Ironically, Peoria became a test market for Goff, too. There, he honed the skills that prepared him for leadership roles and enabled him to make a meaningful impact on the organizations and communities he served throughout his career.

In 1978, Goff joined Caterpillar, a global leader in heavy machinery and power systems manufacturing, where he quickly discovered that his background in

communications and talent for analysis and strategic thinking were valuable assets that allowed him to excel in a Fortune 500 company over a remarkable 37-year career.

Caterpillar opened new horizons for Goff, traveling him worldwide to work in various positions, from advertising and international financial risk mitigation to managing the company's power systems business with the oil and gas industry and overseeing their commercial engine business in Japan. During one of his job stints at Caterpillar, Goff lived in Hong Kong for 11 years, where he served as chair of the board for the top-ranked Hong Kong International School.

Through his global work travel and working with people in different nations and cultures at every level, Goff says that he gained an invaluable perspective on diverse cultures and societies and the importance of understanding the global landscape and what the people of the world have to bring to industry to increase the quality of life for everyone.

Now, as the chair of LSTC's Board of Directors and liaison to LSTC's Foundation's Board, Goff draws from the diverse tapestry of his experiences to help steer the seminary through a period of transformation. As the needs of the Church change, Goff understands that LSTC must change, too.

"Traditional congregations face challenges with demographic changes and evolving community needs," says Goff. "For churches to thrive, they must embrace a broader mission that goes beyond traditional roles of worship and education. Listening to the community's needs is critical to this transition."

For LSTC to thrive in the future, Goff says it must be willing to face the challenges ahead and move beyond the traditional paradigms that conceived it to become an intellectual and spiritual knowledge hub equipping leaders to serve in a complex, dynamic, and global society. While remaining theologically and scripturally based, LSTC should adapt to new realities and provide students with the tools to excel in these changing environments.

One challenge Goff and other LSTC board members have taken on recently is related to the seminary's Reparations Initiative. In April 2023, the LSTC Board of Directors Executive Committee approved a resolution to establish a Reparations Task Force to examine and propose a reparations plan for the seminary to begin next year.

Since that time, the task force, which includes President James Nieman as support staff, and board members Morgan Gates (task force convener), Terry Goff (board chair), Greg Lewis (board vice-chair), and Kristi Ferguson (immediate past board chair), has been meeting to explore the issue and to create a proposal for the seminary's initiative based on what they learn.

"Challenges in and of themselves are not easy or comfortable," says Goff, "but the willingness to face up to them, consider how you might respond to them, consider what is needed in society and the community by listening, not telling, but by listening to what populations and people say they need as opposed to sitting in the ivory tower and telling them what they may need, I think is core to LSTC facing the future and thriving." 🌿

A portrait of Dr. Karri Alldredge, a woman with short red hair, smiling. She is wearing a dark blue top with white and pink polka dots and large black teardrop earrings. The background is a solid red wall with a faint rectangular frame.

SHAPING FAITH AND FUTURE

Dr. Karri Alldredge is opening new doors for textual exploration at LSTC

By Keisha Dyson

DR. KARRI ALLDREDGE HAS ALWAYS HAD A PASSION FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Growing up in a Lutheran community, her faith has long been deeply rooted in the teachings of the Bible. But it was her journey through life, shaped by a unique blend of personal experiences and academic pursuits, that led her to the role of Assistant Professor of New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Her focus on Queer biblical interpretation and trauma studies opens new opportunities for textual exploration at LSTC.

As a child, Dr. Alldredge was nurtured by St. Paul Lutheran Church (Port Huron, MI), a supportive ELCA Lutheran congregation that allowed her the space to explore her call to engage in all aspects of church and community life. Her journey had initially pointed toward becoming a Lutheran pastor, a path she was well-prepared for. However, her life and sense of call would take an unexpected turn during her MDiv studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York City (UTS).

While at UTS, Dr. Alldredge completed her field education with CONNECT, an organization deeply committed to preventing interpersonal violence and promoting intimate justice. There, she experienced how the Bible was both wielded as a weapon to keep people in dangerous situations and a source of hope. “This work is life and death, especially for communities where this is a sacred text. It calls for finding new ways to approach texts and traditions that are truth-telling and transformative,” said Dr. Alldredge.

Witnessing firsthand how scripture could be used to justify violence and place

individuals in dangerous situations prompted Dr. Alldredge to delve deeper into the New Testament to explore the nuances of a text that could be both life-giving and death-dealing.

Her journey in New Testament studies led her to two distinct paths of exploration. The first path focused on how biblical texts were shaped by and reflected the violence and trauma experienced by communities throughout history. Whether it was examining the traumatic impact of the destruction of the temple on the Gospel of Mark or the ongoing use of scripture to oppress marginalized groups, Dr. Alldredge examined how these texts were intimately intertwined with violence and trauma. Her research came to center on addressing how biblical texts and traditions are used to oppress LGBTQIA+ communities, as well as to bolster white supremacy.

But another side to her work was the exploration of how these same texts provided hope, inspiration, and resistance. She witnessed how these texts could empower individuals to find their voices and claim their space within their faith communities. This became especially true within her work in Queer Hermeneutics where she witnessed students’ breathing new life into texts, reflecting their own experiences in their interpretational work.

This desire to empower students extends into her classes where Dr. Alldredge believes in fostering learning communities where students can bring their wisdom, experiences, and perspectives. Dr. Alldredge shared, “The global nature of the LSTC community offers an opportunity for students to learn from and with one another as they seek to bring

about transformative justice in their own communities.”

Her experience extends beyond the classroom as well. Dr. Alldredge spent 15 years in New York City, working at the United Nations, representing various NGOs in discussions about gender-based violence and media rights, particularly from a faith-based perspective. Through this work, she learned to recognize the unique role that faith-based organizations play in pursuing justice, acknowledging the harm religions have caused historically, while striving to contribute positively to global

18:6 historically, as well as how it is used in anti-trans laws in the U.S. today. This helps students prepare for engaging the multiplicity of lived experiences in their present community, communities they’ll serve, and as well as encouraging them to be in dialogue with other communities.”

Because Dr. Alldredge understands the power of scripture in shaping perceptions and influencing policies, both positively and negatively, her goal is to equip her students and the wider community with the skills to



I INTENTIONALLY CALL MY CLASSROOM ‘LEARNING COMMUNITIES’ WHERE EVERYONE CONTRIBUTES WISDOM, BRINGING THEMSELVES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES OF ACCOUNTABILITY INTO THE SPACE OF ENGAGING THE TEXT. IN DOING SO, THEY DEVELOP SKILLS TO DO CRITICAL WORK WITH THE TEXT IN ITS MANY CONTEXTS.”

DR. KIM ALLDREDGE

efforts for change.

Now, as the Assistant Professor of New Testament at LSTC, Dr. Alldredge is excited about the unique opportunity the seminary offers in seeking a professor focused on Queer biblical interpretation. This spring she’s preparing to teach Queer Hermeneutics and seeks to engender an intellectual space where everyone can grow. “I intentionally call my classroom ‘learning communities’ where everyone contributes wisdom, bringing themselves and their communities of accountability into the space of engaging the text. In doing so, they develop skills to do critical work with the text in its many contexts. For example, we examine Jesus’ teaching about not causing little ones to sin in Matthew

critically engage with these texts, challenge oppressive interpretations, and hold space for a multiplicity of voices and perspectives.

For Dr. Alldredge, this is a grassroots change that needs to become systemic. She believes in the importance of not just saying the right words but embodying the values of openness, affirmation, and anti-oppression within faith communities. Her mission is to inspire her students to go beyond rhetoric and actively work for justice.

As she continues her work at LSTC, Dr. Alldredge will remain dedicated to her academic pursuits, her convictions, and her commitment to shape a more just and expansive world through the study and interpretation of the New Testament. 🌱

LSTC BOARD'S TRANSFORMATIVE MEETING SETS THE STAGE FOR AMBITIOUS PLANS IN THE SEMINARY'S FUTURE

By Keisha Dyson

IN A SYMBOLIC MOVE TO EMBRACE CHANGE AND FACE THE CHALLENGES OF TOMORROW, THE LUTHERAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AT CHICAGO (LSTC) BOARD OF DIRECTORS GATHERED FOR THEIR ANNUAL NOVEMBER MEETING IN THE SEMINARY'S NEWLY ESTABLISHED LOCATION AT THE CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

This significant shift marked a pivotal moment for the board as they met for the first time in this location and delved into an agenda brimming with both challenges and opportunities.

The meeting commenced with a harmonious blend of prayer, reflection, and a warm welcome extended by Presidents Barbara Reid and David Crawford from the Catholic Theological Union and McCormick Theological Seminary, respectively. As the

minutes from the previous meeting were approved, the stage was set for a carefully curated schedule designed to address the school's routine business blended with a board retreat.

Key decisions emanated from the Academics and Community Committee, notably the approval of sabbatical proposals for Esther Menn and Brooke Petersen, promising enriching experiences for the faculty in the upcoming years. The Committee's commitment to addressing pertinent issues was further underscored by the call to review and update the LSTC Harassment Policy, demonstrating the board's dedication to fostering a safe and inclusive environment.

The LSTC Board of Directors delegated to the Finance and Operations Committee approval authority of the Tuition and Fee Schedule for Fiscal Year 2025, with the advice and counsel of

LSTC Administration. The fees will be approved by December 31, 2023, and published by January 31, 2024.

However, the Board's commitment to innovation was most evident during the retreat portion, where presentations on the evolving landscape of higher education and opportunities in online learning took center stage.

President Nieman's thought-provoking remarks set the tone, navigating the complexities of higher education, addressing the wealth gap, and acknowledging societal shifts. His emphasis on the 'nones' and the marginalized underscored the need for transformative change in theological education.

Following Nieman's lead, LSTC staff presented a compelling case for transitioning to asynchronous learning. The presentations included an introduction to future prospective audiences

through nine learner personas, an overview of the most successful distance learning models currently in the marketplace, an example of a phased approach to asynchronous learning at LSTC, and a discussion around budgeting. The Board, recognizing the urgency and potential of this initiative, culminated the session with three groundbreaking resolutions.

Resolution 1 authorizes research and development on asynchronous education approaches, Resolution 2 establishes an Asynchronous Learning Task Force, and Resolution 3 allocates up to \$500,000 for this transformative journey.

As LSTC boldly charts its future, these resolutions signify a commitment to adaptability, innovation, and a vision that echoes beyond the seminary walls, impacting the broader landscape of theological education. 🌱

DATES SOON TO BE ANNOUNCED

Experience the Legacy

LSTC Homecoming and Seminex 50th Anniversary Conference

Join us at LSTC's new campus for a once-in-a-lifetime experience! This year we are combining Homecoming with the the 50th Anniversary of Seminex in person and online.

Get ready for an event-packed weekend as we celebrate a legacy of faith, education, and transformation. This remarkable event features engaging sessions, insightful discussions, and reunions that you won't forget.

Don't miss this incredible opportunity to be a part of this momentous occasion. Register today and immerse yourself in the rich history and promising future of Seminex and LSTC. We can't wait to welcome you!



#Seminex50th #LSTCHomecoming



Lutheran School of
Theology at Chicago



INTRODUCING THE ALL-NEW ONLINE ALUMNI HUB

At LSTC, our legacy is built on the success of our graduates who have gone on to make a significant impact worldwide. Today, we are thrilled to unveil the all-new alumni portion of **LSTC.edu** — a digital space dedicated to honoring and connecting our incredible alumni network.



STAY IN THE LOOP WITH ALUMNI GATHERINGS

Don't miss out on the excitement! Stay up-to-date with alumni gatherings, reunions, and events happening near you. Reconnect with old friends and create new memories as we celebrate the enduring bonds forged at LSTC.



MEET YOUR ALUMNI BOARD

Our Alumni Board, a passionate group of individuals dedicated to serving and supporting our alumni community, is here to make your LSTC experience even more memorable. Get to know the faces behind the Board, learn about their goals, and discover how they're working to enrich your alumni experience.



DISCOVER ALUMNI STORIES THAT INSPIRE

Explore the inspiring journeys and achievements of your fellow alumni. From groundbreaking research to industry leadership, our alumni have stories that will motivate and captivate. Be prepared to be inspired, challenged, and uplifted.



YOUR ONE-STOP DESTINATION FOR ALUMNI RESOURCES

We've gathered a treasure trove of resources just for you! Whether you're seeking career advice, looking to mentor or be mentored, or simply wanting to reconnect with old classmates, our alumni hub is your go-to destination. Access exclusive benefits, career services, and more, all in one convenient place.

Join us in celebrating the extraordinary achievements of LSTC alumni worldwide. Explore, connect, and thrive in our vibrant alumni community. Visit the all-new alumni portion of **lstc.edu** today and be a part of something truly exceptional.

Visit us now at www.lstc.edu/alumni

NEARLY EVERY SCHOOL LIKE OURS FACES UNPRECEDENTED, EPOCHAL, RAPID, IRREVERSIBLE CHANGE

By James Nieman

▶ ALL ACROSS THE HORIZON OF FORMAL, ACCREDITED, DEGREE-BASED THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION (SEMINARIES, DIVINITY SCHOOLS, OR SCHOOLS OF THEOLOGY), MATTERS ARE MORE CHALLENGING THAN ENCOURAGING. Nearly every school like ours faces unprecedented, epochal, rapid, irreversible change. This isn't simply about finances but who we teach, how we partner, and why we exist. Our employees are affected by this as well,

education is the result of three factors: developments in **broader society**, changes in the religious landscape, and the impact of both of these on theological education in particular.

The developments in broader society started long ago but are keenly felt today. It began with growing secularization and its many effects on how we regard our world. In his *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor put it this way: "Why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in, say, 1500 in our Western society, while in 2000 many of us

The main result is rapid deinstitutionalization, a staggering mistrust that what once led to thriving can work for us any longer. Whether as families, charities, schools, businesses, or governments, institutions that once led to shared aims are under suspicion, the remedy now seen as the problem. All this is compounded by a widening inequity gap in resources, access, voice, and potential, further alienating us. To use a single form of inequity, vast income disparity alone leads many to say the game is rigged.

At one time, we gained a sense of personal identity

believing and belonging.

The changes in the **religious landscape** also reflect a history, one we can see already in the 1970s. Tracked by the crude measure of survey responses about participation, religious adherence in America has declined in the last half-century for every group but a few. And the exceptions are due to birthrates or immigration, neither being overtly religious factors, and which even then only let these few groups hold steady in size. The fabled days of religious force in civic life is long past and may have existed only as a

HOW WE GOT HERE &

feeling directly to blame for what we face or paralyzed about what to do next. If we are to find a way forward, though, we need to tell the truth of what is really happening, dispelling the false narratives that leave us ashamed and stuck. That's my purpose here, in remarks I have already shared with our board and cabinet and faculty.

While no one can or should offer any simple solutions, I can sketch an accurate account of how this came to be. And the point of this analysis is to help us set aside the typical myths that entrap us so we can look clearly at things as they are, let alone what we still have the power to do differently. In short, the situation in which we find ourselves today in formal **theological**

find this not only easy, but even inescapable?" Taylor did not mean some religious decline but a changed worldview, an inability to perceive mystery or holiness in our world. Lacking any numinous dimension, ours is a "what you see is what you get" reality. All is exactly as it seems, nothing more.

Left to our own devices in an "imminent frame" of our own making, we are responsible for it all – including the blame.

Consider that worldview in light of so many systems failures today: environment, nutrition, health, discourse, stability, education, and so on. Challenges in such areas were named long ago but still persist, feeding our fecklessness and despair.

and meaning through associations, groups to which we belonged who ascribed to us value and purpose. In a flat, secular reality strewn with broken institutions, though, this now rarely happens.

Instead, we learn who we are through our achievement and performance, what we attain or display in disparate parts of our lives. The result is personal identity that is shallow, shifting, fragmented, and unreliable. We scramble to know who we are or how to be with others, amplifying our isolation and doubt. But if you cannot trust anyone besides yourself, you have nowhere to turn when things go wrong. All of this exerts pressure on the next factor we face, the nature of

brief aberration. For example, today 68% of Americans claim a religious affiliation, but a century ago this stood at 52%, after the Civil War at 35%, and during the Revolution at 17%. The role of religion in America is not predominant.

As many know, there is one group of survey respondents that has grown during the last fifty years – those disaffiliated from any religious group. The proportion of these respondents doubled with each generation since the 1970s and now stands at 32%. Some overtly reject faith claims, being atheists or agnostics (6% each). The responses of the rest, though, are just a passive claim that no religious affiliation fits them – the 20% often called

the “nones.” They do not reject believing, religious organizations, or spiritual practices, but instead think no available label fits. Interestingly, in light of my earlier remarks, these respondents often stand apart from institutions of all kinds, alienated from a range of social or economic supports.

The impact of such societal and religious forces on a denomination like the ELCA is clear. Declining membership and growing religious disaffiliation mean that our church is starved from bottom to top – for support, talent, vision, or the next generation. Atop this, institutional mistrust can foster a corrosive social setting in which a credible religious voice or presence

meant to shape leaders for that church embedded in that society, and we knew how to do that. But the task has changed and the old ways no longer work. When LSTC was formed in 1962, church support and personal gifts (no tuition, no endowment) used to balance annual expenses, barely. Today, though, our work requires multiple revenue and expense streams unimagined back then, leaving us vulnerable, inflexible, and flawed by repeating past patterns and practices. It is a recipe for collapse.

Nor are we shielded from wider forces, but buffeted by waves of societal, economic, political, and legal pressure that affect everyone in higher education. Key regulative

1,241 enrolled in 2007, to 101 graduates and under 700 enrolled in 2019. We are not alone in this. Among all seminaries accredited by the Association of Theological Schools, fall 2023 enrollment figures showed 55% of member schools with lower enrollment than the year before, a trend that has held constant for the past decade. And even if we were all holding steady, would we be offering the wisdom and skills needed for a changing church? Would we be reaching a group of learners reflective of our complex society? Would we be giving access to all those eager to learn but still left out, within or beyond the church?

That’s the challenge before us: to rethink our

WHERE WE COULD GO

is muted if not rejected, since all institutional forms are suspect. Facing fewer resources within and limited impact without, denominations then typically turn inward to structural or administrative strategies that solve little and deplete further. Lost in this freefall is attention to our own identity, voice, or value, a distinctive way of life that potential adherents might welcome.

The impact of all this on theological education has been sobering. Seminaries were designed long ago, largely for a different purpose. We were meant for a society that presumed divine mystery. We were meant for a church that had an established place. We were

changes or philanthropic trends (to name just two) far exceed our ecclesial ambit and yet can deeply impact even the most well-meaning, well-run school. More haunting than these external forces, we have persisted in offering a dated leadership package that does not fully attend to the church’s emerging needs. Both within LSTC and across the ELCA, we have not been leaders. We still mainly train managers for local church franchises, not for innovative approaches, rethinking structures, or hybrid gatherings. We are not showing our church how to change and thrive in the world.

No wonder that ELCA seminary graduation and enrollment figures declined in the past fifteen years – from 278 graduates and

formational mission so we reach more learners, more diverse learners, and with the learning they will truly need. Wallowing in guilt about why this didn’t happen sooner won’t help, either. After all, the changes we face are unprecedented, epochal, rapid, irreversible...and in large measure, not our fault. What would be inexcusable is not changing now. And we have done harder things than this. We must quickly become a school whose wide access and welcome creates a place for forming a new kind of church – focused on discipleship not membership, led with empowerment not control, driven by curiosity not conformity, open to every new way the Spirit will call and gather and send. ✱

ONE LAST QUESTION

COMPILED & EDITED BY LYNDSEY MONSEN



ADAM GROENKE

PRONOUNS: he/him/his

DEGREE PROGRAM: Master of Divinity

HOMETOWN: Cleveland, Ohio

WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE LSTC?

I went to college at Miami University in Ohio where I studied global politics/diplomacy and philosophy. I decided to come to LSTC after I visited here for the March Seminary Sampler program for prospective students. I love the area and all the opportunities LSTC and Chicago provides, but really what drew me here was all of the amazing people I met that weekend. It is such a vibrant and loving community and one I was very eager to become a part of.

WHAT PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES HELPED YOU TO GET HERE?

All of my family and friends have been very supportive of me in coming here to LSTC, including my father who is a current ELCA pastor and my grandfather who is a former ELCA pastor. My home congregation, Immanuel Lutheran Church in Pflugerville, Texas, has been immensely supportive as well, and I am so thankful for my family, friends, and congregation's support.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO LEARN DURING YOUR TIME AT LSTC?

I am very excited to dive deep into the meaning of scripture and the living word and learn how to share God's word in ways that support all those in need.



ADDY STUEVER

PRONOUNS: she/her and they/them

DEGREE PROGRAM: Master of Divinity

HOMETOWN: Capac, Michigan

WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE LSTC?

I chose LSTC for its commitment to fostering a diverse church, ecumenical opportunities and proximity to my loved ones in Chicago and Michigan.

WHAT PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES HELPED YOU TO GET HERE?

I owe gratitude for the support during my discernment journey to my family, my friends and many pastors across my youth. I am especially thankful for people in my life who modeled the joy of community, fostered my sense of justice and skepticism of "the way it's always been done," and listened with eagerness as I began to verbalize my call to ministry.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO LEARN DURING YOUR TIME AT LSTC?

I hope to learn the skills I will need to create thriving rural communities as a parish minister.



ERIK GRAYVOLD

PRONOUNS: he/him/his

DEGREE PROGRAM: Master of Theology/
Doctor of Philosophy

HOMETOWN: Ewen, MI

WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE LSTC?

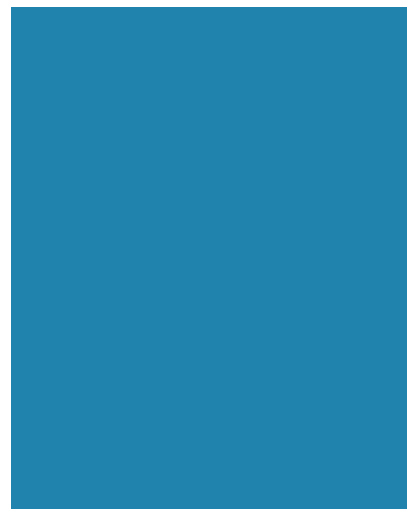
The academic opportunities of ACTS while having a homebase to focus on Lutheran theology.

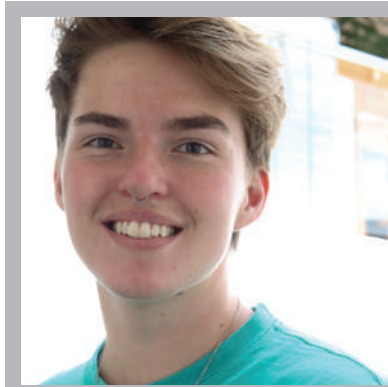
WHAT PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES HELPED YOU TO GET HERE?

Dr. Colby Dickinson, Dr. Edmondo Lupieri, and Dr. Miguel Diaz of Loyola University-Chicago. Rev. Dr. Sam Giere, Rev. Dr. Winston Persaud, Rev. Dr. Troy Troftgruben, and Rev. Dr. Gwen Sayler of Wartburg Theological Seminary. Finally, my spouse, Angela Moore.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO LEARN DURING YOUR TIME AT LSTC?

The interplay of theology and authoritarian systems.





HANNAH PETERSON

PRONOUNS: she/her/hers

DEGREE PROGRAM: Master of Divinity

HOMETOWN: Hamilton, Montana

WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE LSTC?

I chose LSTC for its intentional community and action focus. I knew I'd be moving to Chicago with my partner, and it was important to me that I become involved in the local community - being a student at LSTC both allows me the physical presence to do that, and also pushes and encourages me to do so through programming and coursework.

WHAT PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES HELPED YOU TO GET HERE?

My member church, St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Logan Square, supports me spiritually, and as I go through the Word and Sacrament candidacy process in the Metro Chicago Synod. My parents and grandparents (dad's side) are pastors in western Washington, [and] my grandma was one of the first women ordained in the ELCA. I am grateful for the support of my family as I've explored life since leaving home. I am grateful also for the support and care of my partner.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO LEARN DURING YOUR TIME AT LSTC?

I hope to learn so much during my time at LSTC! I am excited to learn the ways the Holy Spirit has moved through history and to practice being a witness in the world.



MADELYN ANDERSON

PRONOUNS: she/her

DEGREE PROGRAM: Master of Divinity

HOMETOWN: New Providence, IA

WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE LSTC?

I chose LSTC because of its commitment to LGBTQIA+ inclusion and emphasis on moving the church forward into the world as it is.

WHAT PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES HELPED YOU TO GET HERE?

I am so grateful to Wartburg College and my pre-seminary cohort for forming me from a scared evangelical girl into a bold Lutheran leader. I am especially grateful to my sponsoring church, Redeemer Lutheran Church in Waverly and to Pastor Corey for always supporting me, even through the tough times of discernment.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO LEARN DURING YOUR TIME AT LSTC?

I hope to learn more about Biblical studies, as well as deepen my pastoral care skills and my community organizing capabilities.



JOSH SPANGLER

PRONOUNS: he/him/his

DEGREE PROGRAM: Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM)

HOMETOWN: Somerset, PA

WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE LSTC?

LSTC's online TEEM program.

WHAT PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES HELPED YOU TO GET HERE?

My four kids, wife, parents, and my entire church family.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO LEARN DURING YOUR TIME AT LSTC?

I am excited to learn as much as I can from everyone in the class, especially in the area of pastoral care. I am currently a principal, and a lifelong learner!

ONE LAST QUESTION

COMPILED & EDITED BY LYNDSEY MONSEN



LEAH BERDAHL

PRONOUNS: she/her

DEGREE PROGRAM: Master of Divinity

HOMETOWN: Sioux Falls, SD

WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE LSTC?

I was drawn to LSTC by the academic opportunities, vibrant welcoming community, and affirming attention to social advocacy.

WHAT PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES HELPED YOU TO GET HERE?

I grew up in Sioux Falls, SD where my home church, Spirit of Joy, nurtured me in faith and action. I was then fostered at the St. Olaf College Student Congregation before I left with my B.A. in Religion and Sociology/Anthropology.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO LEARN DURING YOUR TIME AT LSTC?

I'm looking forward to learning more about community organizing, ministerial leadership, and parish ministry.



LUCAS FIET

PRONOUNS: he/him

DEGREE PROGRAM: Master of Arts

HOMETOWN: Knoxville, Tennessee

WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE LSTC?

My undergraduate degree was in religious studies at a public university. I wanted to continue my studies where I could combine rigorous academic approaches with personal, spiritual appreciation for the material. LSTC seemed like a great place to hear a lot of perspectives and meet like-minded people! I already had a few friends living in Chicago and loving it, so I decided it was time to step out of my comfort zone and experience somewhere really different from my hometown.

WHAT PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES HELPED YOU TO GET HERE?

Tyson House, the Lutheran/Episcopalian student ministry at the University of Tennessee, is where I met some great spiritual mentors who encouraged me to participate in liturgy, preach, and lead in all kinds of new ways. It was a safe place to ask big questions, and I learned so much about myself and about God, all while making some lifelong friends.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO LEARN DURING YOUR TIME AT LSTC?

I am really excited to gain a deeper understanding of the Bible by learning Hebrew and Greek. I especially love studying the early church and its relationship with the existing culture and communities in late antiquity. I also am really passionate about LGBTQ inclusion, and would love to learn about how the church is working to create increasingly welcoming and safe spaces.



JAN FRANDO PURBA

PRONOUNS: he/him/his

DEGREE PROGRAM: Master of Arts

HOMETOWN: Indonesia

WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE LSTC?

I chose LSTC because I know that LSTC is one of the best Lutheran schools in the world and I have some LSTC alumni friends who provided information about LSTC. At LSTC I will also be enriched with international experiences through the international student community.

WHAT PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES HELPED YOU TO GET HERE?

Other international students helped me to get here.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO LEARN DURING YOUR TIME AT LSTC?

I hope I can learn about Systematic Theology specifically.



MIA FEDERMANN

PRONOUNS: she/her/hers

DEGREE PROGRAM: Master of Divinity

HOMETOWN: Stuttgart, Germany

WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE LSTC?

What I like about LSTC is how it combines academic education and lived spirituality and faith. For the last 4 years of studying theology in Germany I developed my love for academics, especially systematic theology, religious study and philosophy. But I forgot that what I learned also affects myself. I hope that I find a good balance between both at LSTC. Additionally, I believe that the big international community at LSTC is enriching – in academics and of course as well when it comes to ministry, spirituality and faith.

WHAT PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES HELPED YOU TO GET HERE?

My home church and my scholarship informed me about the option to study at LSTC as an exchange student.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO LEARN DURING YOUR TIME AT LSTC?

I'm curious to learn about Lutheranism in America, since my university in Germany focuses on the roots of Lutheranism but not that much on how it developed elsewhere. I'm also looking forward to learning about an American—or, to consider the international community, let's say a non-German style of preaching and ministry. In addition, I am really hoping to learn about a diverse systematic theology(s) and more generally theological intersectionality.



TOBI FRIEDLEIN

PRONOUNS: he/him/his

DEGREE PROGRAM: non-degree seeking student (exchange student, here for ten months)

HOMETOWN: Windsbach, Germany

WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE LSTC?

I chose LSTC because my teacher recommended LSTC and I'm excited to see the city of Chicago.

WHAT PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES HELPED YOU TO GET HERE?

My teacher helped me with organizing my trip and when I came to Chicago, Kornelius and Miriam (fellow LSTC students, also from Germany) helped me to arrive and set up the furniture in my apartment.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO LEARN DURING YOUR TIME AT LSTC?

I hope to learn a lot of practical skills at LSTC. Because the studies in Germany are more theoretical, but here I'm doing two practical courses about preaching and environmental justice this term.



NIXON MWITULA

PRONOUNS: he/him/his

DEGREE PROGRAM: Master of Divinity

WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE LSTC?

I chose the Lutheran School of Theology because it is an innovative learning seminary, and it also has enough experience to train future public leaders who have the potential to smile and warmly welcome, and attract many to apply to this seminary.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO LEARN DURING YOUR TIME AT LSTC?

I will definitely learn American theology, clinical pastoral education, counseling, mental health, and interfaith theology so as to minister to the new dynamic community in 21st-century America.





Lutheran School of Theology *at* Chicago

5416 South Cornell Avenue, 4th Floor

Chicago, IL 60615

www.lstc.edu

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RE-IMAGINE | RE-INVENT | RE-AFFIRM | RE-NEW | **THE CAMPAIGN FOR LSTC**

Unlocking a Transformative New Era



RE-IMAGINE

Join us as we re-imagine our home on the fourth floor of CTU. Your support ensures our new space reflects our values, shaping visionary leaders for the future.



RE-INVENT

With your help, we offer in-person, hybrid, and distance learning options, extending our reach to aspiring leaders across the globe.



RE-AFFIRM

LSTC re-affirms its commitment to being Christ-centered, diverse, and excellent. Your support fuels scholarships that enable students to transform communities and become faith leaders.



RE-NEW

Support LSTC's centers and initiatives, renewing your commitment to interfaith relations, intersectionality, creation care, and more. Your support extends their reach.

Your Support Shapes the Future

At LSTC, we are re-imagining, re-inventing, re-affirming, and re-newing. But we can't do it alone. Together, we create a brighter future for theological education.

Join the Campaign for LSTC and be a part of this transformative journey. Together, we shape the future of faith leadership.

Learn more at www.lstc.edu/reimagine