



Next year, Breaking the Chains Church will celebrate its 10th anniversary—a milestone in a ministry that began in one of the least likely of places: inside a correctional facility.

For Pastor David Rebey, MDiv 20, the congregation's current leader, the story is one of persistence, presence, and the power of God to transform lives in unexpected spaces. Many of the men at Felmers O. Chaney Correctional Center are transferred from other prisons for their last few years as they prepare to re-enter society. Before Breaking the Chains existed, there was no pastoral presence in the facility.



Harvested at the Felmers Chaney Center and shared with Tricklebee Cafe, where everyone eats regardless of ability to pay. This is a simple, powerful act of community care our men helped provide.

Breaking the Chains: A Church Without Walls

That changed when Rev. Joseph Ellwanger, BDiv 57, petitioned the Wisconsin Department of Corrections to bring men to worship off-site.

From that seed grew the idea of planting a congregation inside the prison. Partnering with local congregations and other agencies, Breaking the Chains held its first worship service in 2016. David, then a seminary student, served on the formation team and volunteered weekly for Bible studies and worship.

Today, Breaking the Chains' work now extends beyond prison walls. Approved to escort men into the community, David and volunteers lead weekly service

projects at churches and nonprofits. These projects aren't just about cleaning carpets or doing maintenance; they're about restoring dignity.

Worship at Breaking the Chains is informal and ecumenical, with men from diverse church backgrounds and some with no church experience at all. David preaches briefly, then invites discussion. Recently, during a study of John 13, a man preparing for release tearfully confessed he felt unworthy of God's love and planned to return to homelessness. Another participant spoke up and told him "I love you like a brother, and you are a precious child of God." That moment

sparked a cultural shift. The men began checking in with each other in the halls during the week. "It made me pause and tear up," David says. "God was at work in a hard place."

Looking ahead, David hopes to bring on Seminary interns to learn about prison ministry and perhaps plant new congregations. "This is a different way of doing church," he says. "We don't have a building or a youth group. But we have a growing community, inside and outside the prison, who call Breaking the Chains their church home."

Read the full story by visiting <https://lstc.edu/stories/>.



LSTC Graduation Spotlight

LSTC celebrated the 22 graduates of the Class of 2025 in May earlier this year. Bishop Yehiel Curry delivered this year's commencement address, sending graduates into ministry with a charge

to lead faithfully in changing times.

Want to meet the graduates? Explore the 2025 Graduate Spotlights to see where they're headed next and how LSTC shaped their call. Visit <https://lstc.edu/spotlight/>.

2025 Graduates at a Glance

- 14** Master of Divinity (MDiv)
- 2** Master of Arts (MA)
- 1** Master of Theology (ThM)
- 2** Doctor of Ministry (DMin)
- 1** Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- 2** Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM)

What are your post-graduation plans?



Trent Ormsbee-Hale
(MDiv 25)

I plan to remain in the Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod and seek a call to congregational ministry as a pastor. I think places like Texas need the courageous and vital witness of ELCA leaders and congregations more than ever, and I'm fired up to take on that challenge!



Emily Moentmann
(MDiv 25)

I will continue pursuing my bi-vocational call, working toward my LISW and first call. I'm excited to serve as a therapist and mobilize church communities to confront injustice. Creating space for individual experience and leading communities toward a more faithful witness to the Gospel is at the heart of my call.



Juan Manuel Arias-Perea
(MDiv 25)

I plan to serve in a bilingual, multicultural congregation, focusing on creating spaces of radical hospitality and justice. I envision a ministry that celebrates cultural diversity, incorporates vibrant worship in multiple languages, and advocates for marginalized communities. Beyond congregational work, I hope to engage in community organizing and collaborate with local nonprofits to address issues such as immigration reform, housing, and education equity.

Orientation Week Held Aug. 25-29

The start of a new academic year at LSTC is more than just the turning of a calendar — it's a threshold moment, a call to step into a community of learning,

worship, and service. From August 25-29, new and returning students gathered for Orientation Week under this year's theme, "*Here I am. Send me.*" (Isaiah 6:8).

2025 – 2026 Academic Year Enrollment at LSTC

89 students enrolled, including:

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| 28 MDiv | 5 DMin |
| 7 MA | 30 PhD |
| 5 MAM | 4 TEEM |
| 7 MTh | 3 Special |



Hannah Peterson (MDiv 27) advocated for more young leaders at Churchwide Assembly.

Hannah Peterson Champions Youth Leadership at Churchwide Assembly

When Hannah Peterson (MDiv 27) arrived at this summer's Churchwide Assembly, she brought two things: the practical tools of a community organizer and the theological confidence formed at LSTC. She'd noticed a gap. The ELCA's governing documents didn't reflect the Lutheran World Federation's long-standing goal of 20% youth participation in leadership (with "youth" defined as under 35). So, she got to work.

The amendments needed 25 signatures by 9:15 pm. Monday. Peterson tracked down references, drafted language aligned to LWF standards, rallied young adults via group chat, and built a floor strategy. By week's end, the Assembly approved the change and, thanks to behind-the-scenes negotiations, added a clause directing the Church Council to craft an implementation plan.

Between sessions, Peterson coached young speakers, helping them shape concise, story-driven testimonies grounded in hope. On the floor, she introduced herself as "an Army veteran, seminarian, and the 28-year-old daughter of two pastors and the granddaughter of one of the first ordained women in this church," inviting a yes vote to bring the ELCA into fuller alignment with global partners. Debate followed, some enthusiastic, some skeptical, but the coalition held.

Delegate Carolyn Utech from the Metro Chicago Synod, who helped "get the ordination of women into the church", gave a testimony that was very powerful. Utech said, "I trust young people. Sometimes I trust them even more than people my age. I believe this is not a binary decision whether it goes from top down or down up. We are leaders here. If we lead and say it's important and get

that message out to the churches, it becomes more important to the churches, to the congregations, and especially to the young people. We need people who think outside of old boxes. I really believe they can do this work if we help them." For Peterson, that moment was healing. "In a world in which the most powerful elders have taken the resources and held on tight, leaving little for the rest of us, it was healing to hear Carolyn's testament and trust," she said.

The vote wasn't symbolic; it signals a culture shift toward trusting younger leaders now, not someday. For Peterson, it's Spirit-led and deeply practical: build relationships, prepare voices, and make the case with both data and discipleship. "Every speaker in favor brought their own diverse story... behind every speaker was a hope and love for the Church," she reflects.

A Message from the Alumni Board

DEAR LSTC ALUMNI,

Life at LSTC is full of movement, energy, and hope. Since settling into our home on the 4th floor in the Catholic Theological Union building, the Spirit continues to breathe new life into our community of learning, worship, and service. We also welcomed our new president, Rev. Dr. Shauna Hannan, whose leadership is already inspiring creativity and connection across the seminary.

What we're seeing

Faculty and students are leaning into LSTC's strengths: strong formation, public church partnerships, and a deep commitment to justice-centered ministry. New students are arriving eager to serve, graduates are stepping into calls across the church, and alumni

are mentoring, preaching, and opening contextual education doors. Thank you for the prayers, introductions, gifts, and wisdom you share. Together, we're nurturing a vibrant, relational seminary where theological education thrives, and alumni stay connected for the sake of the Gospel.

Ways to engage this year

- Mentor or host a contextual education/ student ministry placement.
- Share your story for *The Calling* newsletter and social channels.
- Refer a prospective student or invite your congregation to an LSTC info session.
- Support scholarships or the

President's Circle—fuel formation for future leaders.

- Pray with us for students, faculty, staff, and partners in ministry.
- Pray for our church that Christ's witness of love and justice will be made known among our assemblies



In Christ's peace,
**The Rev. Elizabeth Kocher
& The Rev. Michael Fick**
Co-Chairs, LSTC Alumni Board

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Homecoming 2026

Save the date! This year's Homecoming celebration will be **April 27-29, 2026**. Join us for worship, theological conversations, reunions for class of 2001, 2016, 1986 & 1976, and tours of our vibrant campus. Visit lstc.edu/alumni/ for more details.

"Where Are They Now" Campaign

This is our ongoing alumni spotlight celebrating how LSTC

graduates are leading and serving in congregations, chaplaincy, nonprofit leadership, classrooms, community organizing, and retirement. Each month we feature alumni in *The Calling*, on our website, or on social media channels. Tell us where God has called you and what brings you joy in this season. Contact us at advancement@lstc.edu to learn more.

Serve Your Alumni Community

We invite you to consider serving on the Alumni Board or Homecoming Planning Committee. Your gifts and voice matter! Contact us at advancement@lstc.edu to learn more.

Inauguration of President Shauna Hannan

LSTC will celebrate the Inauguration of President Rev. Dr. Shauna Hannan with her installation on **Friday, November 14, 2025**, starting at 4:00pm at LSTC, followed by a Seminary Showcase on Saturday, November 15, 2025, from 9:00am-12:00pm. All are welcome to attend in-person or virtually. Visit lstc.edu/news-events/a-promise-fulfilled/ to register and for more details.

