



SPRING 2020

## WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY SPOTLIGHT

### COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON THE SEMINARY

Face-to-face instruction, with faculty members interacting with students on a personal level, is critical to the formation of pastors. However, as of mid-March, the seminary put face-to-face classes on hold, replacing them with online instruction beginning on March 25. Through all of it, faculty and students are learning—and exhibiting—the importance of flexibility and patience as they move to a different way of teaching and being taught. Each professor was given a Zoom account and supported as they more fully transitioned to classes being on online. In addition, each professor has been getting a crash course in the use of technology to deliver instruction. We believe this will be a blessing in making faculty and students more aware of how technology could be used to augment face-to-face instruction.



As the seminary kept adapting to the COVID-19 orders, professors continued to have faculty meetings, just via Zoom instead of face-to-face.

In the midst of a confusing time, President Treptow shared: “What I do know is what David wrote in Psalm 62, ‘One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: that you, O God, are strong, and that you, O Lord, are loving.’

“We are in the hands of the one who powerfully guides and directs all things. The one who loved us so much that he commissioned his Son to

die for our sins will never forsake us. He will bless us through this, even if it strikes close to home. Please continue to pray for all who have been impacted.”

Encouragement didn’t only take place on our campus, but was shared around our church body as Professor Stephen Geiger shared some devotional thoughts about COVID-19 on his YouTube page, His Word 360 (<https://bit.ly/2QFIO3W>).

In making the challenging decision to cancel the final choir tour he would have the privilege of leading, Professor Tiefel shared this prayer with the churches they intended to visit:

*Almighty God, we come before you to plead for your protection and guidance. We acknowledge that nothing takes place on this planet without your observation and control and that even natural disasters and dreadful diseases are known to you. According to your will and ways, spare us and those we love from the discomfort of the coronavirus and especially from its more serious consequences. Give wisdom to health agencies in our community, our nation, and the world to work together to slow the spread of this disease, care for its victims, and discover a reliable cure. Move the forces of government to assist those affected by the disease and to coordinate a calm and fitting response.*

*Gracious Lord, we believe that you use disasters and diseases to remind us and our world of your sovereignty and significance. Let people everywhere acknowledge that we human creatures are not in control of life and death and that there is a divine power under whom we live and breathe and have our being. Bring us to our knees as we recognize your power and our sins. Then let Christian messengers around the world share the healing power of the gospel so that souls may be directed to your life-saving love in Christ. During this troubling time lift our eyes to the cross of your Son to see your wisdom, power, and love and may that cross lead many to repentance and faith. We pray through Jesus Christ, our Lord.*

# PASTORAL STUDIES INSTITUTE

a partnership of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and WELS Joint Missions

## MEET OUR NEW PSI ADJUNCT

In 2019, Pastor Dan Witte accepted the Lord's call to serve as theological educator for the One Africa Team (OAT). He, his wife, Deb, and their son Drew moved to Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia. (Five other Witte children, ages 25 to 14, remain in the US, living and serving the Lord in various states.)

Read on to learn what Missionary Witte will be doing in Africa and how his work relates to the Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI).

**Theological educator:** Witte's call is to teach and coordinate the teaching of African undergraduates and graduates in our sister church bodies around the continent. This includes confessional Lutheran church bodies in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Malawi, and Zambia. New opportunities are emerging in Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Uganda.

**PSI Adjunct:** In addition to theological training in North America, the PSI Team, at the request of WELS Board for World Missions, collaborates with confessional Lutheran church bodies around the world. In recent years, WELS missions has restructured into "One Teams"—on-site missionaries and stateside committee members who work together to serve different regions. When a member of a One Team (Eurasia, Asia, Africa, Latin America) is asked to train others, he is considered a "PSI Adjunct." The PSI Team is excited to have the capable and dedicated Witte serve in that capacity.

**Land well:** When missionaries and their families move to the other side of the world, it is important that they land well. The initial months and years in a new culture are a time of learning and adjusting. To do this, the Wittes are staying close to the Lord and his Word, learning the language and culture, and focusing on the blessings of their new home—especially their new brothers and sisters in Christ. Missionary Witte is getting to know the people he will be teaching and with whom he will be collaborating.

**Prayer request:** The Wittes ask, "Pray, please, for Christ-centered concord in our One Africa Team and with all our African brothers and sisters. Pray for me and my family for Christ-centered faith, love, and hope. Soon our Lord comes. Pray for humility and perseverance in the inevitable ups and downs of gospel ministry. Satan hates the gospel, but he can't touch it. The angel of the everlasting gospel flies in mid-air, and Satan has been hurled to the earth!"



## GOOD NEWS IN TOUGH TIMES

Covid-19 has brought with it much uncertainty, despair, and anxiety. While these feelings hit very close to home for some, it's good to place our trust in God who is bigger than those feelings. God continues to be with his people and promises to do all things for their good.



With news stories, special reports and Netflix documentaries, focusing on Covid-19 and its negative publicity, we want to share some uplifting news. As you may recall, a few years ago Grow in Grace conducted a study on the trends of pastoral resignation. Since publishing that short piece in Winter 2018, we can now share that we have seen almost a 41% drop in WELS resignations in the past 10 years. Between 2010–2019 there were 96 pastoral resignations. That's compared to 162 in the previous ten-year span (2000–2009). Praise God!

One of the major initiatives begun in our midst this past decade has been the Pastor Partners program of retreats for experienced pastors (and their wives) as well as a mentoring initiative for new pastors. This program pairs a seasoned pastor (mentor) with a WLS new graduate (mentee) for the first three years of his ministry. The retreat portion of the program invites pastors (and their wives) who are celebrating key ministry milestones to celebrate together with their graduating class. Although we are careful not to insist that there is a cause and effect relationship between Pastor Partner mentoring (and retreats) and the lower resignation numbers, it's worth noting that, of pastors who have requested a mentor, only two resignations have occurred.

We will continue to partner with our synod and our pastors in helping even more pastors thrive while ministering under the cross.

