



WINTER 2022

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY SPOTLIGHT

PURSUING ACCREDITATION

The seminary is pursuing accreditation through the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). Dr. Stephen Graham, the ATS staff member appointed to serve as our liaison, reviewed the readiness report the seminary submitted last March and is convinced WLS has the institutional resources needed to complete a self-study in two years. At Dr. Graham's invitation, two WLS faculty members participated in a self-study workshop in September.

The leaders of the workshop consistently emphasized they are not interested in telling schools how to carry out their mission. In fact, ATS has recently published standards that the workshop leaders described as principles-based rather than best-practices-based. In other words, they are not going to tell schools seeking accreditation, "You must have this practice in place to receive accreditation." Our liaison repeatedly told us ATS will not ask us to act contrary to our doctrinal position or the mission given us by WELS. Their desire is to help schools become even better versions of themselves by encouraging them to evaluate their activities in light of the principle-based standards.

The workshop provided an overview of the self-study process and a high-level look at the ten standards of accreditation. The leaders also offered practical guidance on how to conduct institutional and educational evaluation, how to organize for the self-study, and how to write the report. Soon after the workshop, a steering committee was appointed to oversee the process, with Prof. Kenneth Cherney Jr. serving as the chairman. The steering committee then appointed subcommittees, with every faculty member formally serving on one. The subcommittees have begun their work. The steering committee's goal is to submit a self-study report to ATS by December 2023, with a Spring 2024 accreditation team site visit.

The seminary is seeking accreditation for several reasons. Both the governing board and faculty take seriously the responsibility to prepare men who have the character, knowledge, and skills required to serve as

pastors. The self-study central to the accreditation process will require the faculty and governing board to ask for feedback from synodical stakeholders and then to discuss the important question of how best to form faithful Lutheran pastors for service. Having objective outside eyes review the self-study report and offer suggestions regarding areas to improve will also be helpful. Additionally, becoming an accredited institution promises to be beneficial for the work the seminary does in assisting sister church bodies in providing training and degrees for their pastors.

The self-study will require a significant amount of work. It will also be challenging with the significant faculty turnover that has occurred in the last six years. Perhaps what new faculty members lack in institutional memory will be balanced by the fresh eyes and new ideas they bring to the work.

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 8-10: Mission and Ministry

May 1: Legacy Society Luncheon

May 25: Vicar Assignment Service

May 26: Pastor Assignment Service

May 26: Graduation Concert

May 27: Graduation



FACULTY CHANGES

Pastor Jonathan Bare accepted the call to succeed Prof. E. Allen Sorum as Director of the Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) and to serve as a member of the seminary faculty. Originally called in 2016 to serve as International Recruitment Director for PSI, Prof. Bare now officially serves as the administrative leader of the PSI team. During the past five years, the PSI team, working in conjunction with WELS missions, has assisted with the training of pastors in mission fields throughout the world. Professor Sorum remains an important part of the PSI team.

Professor Brad Wordell, who has served on the PSI team since 2015, accepted appointment to serve as the director of Grow in Grace, the seminary's institute for continuing education. To address that vacancy, the seminary's governing board and the WELS Joint Mission Council jointly called Prof. David Bivens to serve on the PSI team. He accepted the call and will add PSI team duties to his classroom responsibilities in New Testament and homiletics. Professor Bivens joined the faculty in 2020. His experience with world missions will be a blessing to the work of the PSI team. He served as a missionary in Brazil (2003–2009) and is currently serving WELS world missions as the chairman of the Africa Administrative Committee.

Pastor Joel Russow decided to accept the call to serve as professor of practical theology (counseling) and systematic theology. A 2010 seminary graduate, he has served as pastor at Faith, Tallahassee, FL, since his assignment from the seminary. Pastor Russow was also serving the South Atlantic District as coordinator for the Commission on Discipleship, member of the Board of Appeals, and circuit pastor.

Pastor Paul Waldschmidt accepted the call to teach Christian education and Old Testament. This call was necessitated by Prof. Tom Kock's decision to return to parish ministry at Atonement, Milwaukee, WI. A 1999 graduate who also earned an STM in Christian education from the seminary in 2020, Pastor Waldschmidt has served at Peace, Hartford, WI, since 2012. He was also a circuit pastor and member of the nominating committee for the Southeastern Wisconsin District. In addition, he is serving as editor of the "Teach the Word" newsletter published jointly by Northwestern Publishing House, WELS Discipleship, and the seminary.

"We thank God for these two new professors. Both love serving as pastors. That makes them ideally suited to service at a seminary that sees its work as 'pastors forming pastors to proclaim God's praise,'" President Treptow said. "The Lord will bless many through their faithful labors."

PASTORAL STUDIES INSTITUTE

a partnership of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and WELS Joint Missions

There have been several changes in the Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI), as noted elsewhere, but the work of PSI isn't changing.

Here in North America, the work of PSI still starts with refugees, immigrants, or members of diaspora people groups coming into WELS congregations. These individuals or groups join the church through the congregation's Bible Information Class. Then, PSI is brought on to develop an appropriate pastoral training program for the individual desiring to become a pastor of our fellowship or for the man who is already serving as leader of a group. The program will typically lead to a bachelor's degree that qualifies the man to serve as a WELS pastor within his people group. Throughout North America, PSI is currently serving more than twenty-five PSI BDiv or BTh students.

Internationally, continuing in our mission means the PSI team still provides a variety of training opportunities for countries served by WELS World Missions and the sister churches in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC). To accomplish this, the PSI team is fully integrated into each of the WELS World Missions regional teams, or "one teams." To better assist these teams and the church bodies they serve, the PSI team has created a "toolbox" of resources that provide regional teams, and the churches they serve, assistance with (1) program and curriculum development, (2) seminary instructor training and mentoring, (3) coordination of visiting instructors, and (4) discussions and training leading toward colloquy and fellowship. A fifth tool is currently being created that will aid the church bodies we serve in assessing their own seminary programs.

Stated simply, PSI's mission remains the same as it has been for years: to walk with these kingdom-committed spiritual leaders worldwide.



Professor Bare teaches John Rudrapaty, originally from India, during his two week visit to the seminary. John is enrolled in the PSI's BDiv program.

