



# Κηρυξάτε PREACH THE GOSPEL

A MAGAZINE OF WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY



## FORMED FOR MINISTRY





## 2022-23 EVENTS

<b>AUGUST 24</b>	Opening Service
<b>SEPTEMBER 19</b>	WLS Alumni Society Annual Meeting
<b>SEPTEMBER 19-20</b>	Symposium
<b>OCTOBER 1</b>	Friends of the Seminary Day
<b>DECEMBER 11</b>	Christmas Concert
<b>JANUARY 9-20</b>	Winterim
<b>FEBRUARY 7-9</b>	Mission and Ministry
<b>MAY 25</b>	Call Day and Graduation Concert
<b>MAY 26</b>	Graduation



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- ✚ Thank you to the authors who contributed to this issue.
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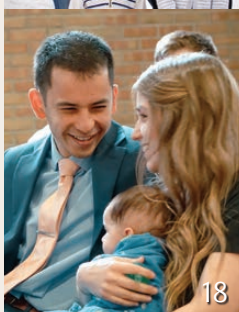
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# The Lord Continually Forms



## THE LORD IS ALWAYS AT WORK. HE NEVER TAKES A VACATION.

Jesus told the Jewish leaders persecuting him for healing a man on the Sabbath, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working” (John 5:17). The one who brought the world into existence by the power of his word continues to sustain it, day after day. The sun remains at the proper distance from the earth because the Lord speaks the word. We have the oxygen we need because the Lord commands it to be so. Were it not for the Lord’s continual work, nothing and no one could continue to live.

The Lord who formed Adam from the dust of the ground continues to form people today. Many don’t recognize that, because the Lord hides behind the process of reproduction he established at creation. The fact remains that the Lord is the maker of all. What the psalmist said is true of every human being: “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb” (Psalm 139:13). The Lord continually forms people as part of his ongoing work of creation and preservation.

In a special way, the Lord forms his church, whom he describes as “the people I formed for myself, that they may proclaim my praise” (Isaiah 43:21). The Lord forms his people by a

miracle of his grace. All human beings are born spiritually dead and enemies of God. Through the Word of Christ, the Holy Spirit graciously raises some from spiritual death to spiritual life. In other words, he gives them faith through the gospel. He enables them to believe what they could never have accepted on their own: that Jesus has rescued them from everlasting punishment and that they are God’s adopted children. Those who are members of God’s family through faith in Christ can take no credit for that. All glory belongs to God, because “no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3).

When the Spirit creates faith, he also forms a new self within the individual. “If anyone is in Christ,” the Apostle Paul writes, “the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The new self loves the Lord and eagerly desires to serve the Savior. That new nature, overwhelmed by the astounding grace of God, longs to live in a way that glorifies the Lord for his full and free forgiveness.

The Lord Jesus gave himself into death, St. Paul says, “to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a



# His People for Service

people that are his very own, eager to do what is good” (Titus 2:14). Jesus released us from the dominion of the devil. By his perfect sacrifice, he freed us from the eternal destruction we deserved because of our sin. More than that, he also set us free to serve the Lord by serving those he places around us in our homes, congregations, and communities. By the gift of the new self, the Lord forms his people for a life of service. The new self within us needs no external compulsion to do what is right. Because the Lord has given us a new nature, we are both eager and able to do what God commands.

Unfortunately, the sinful nature remains. It stubbornly and incessantly fights against the new person within the Christian. God’s people know only too well the bitter struggle of which the Apostle speaks: “I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing” (Romans 7:19). While the sinful nature does not reign in the Christian, it does frustrate the new nature’s designs on living for the Lord.

Thankfully, the Lord never stops working. He doesn’t leave his people to fight their own battles against the old Adam and the devil. Day after day, he forms and reforms his people through his Spirit-inspired Word. Each time God’s children

strengthens them in faith, and makes them eager to declare his praises in everything they say and do. As they hear the word of absolution from their pastor or another Christian, the Lord declares them righteous and moves them to love and forgive others.

The Lord also forms his people for service by giving them abilities and talents he has chosen specifically for them. To one, for instance, he gives the gift of serving, while to another he gives the gift of generosity, and to still another the gift of leading. His intent is to work through his people, and the gifts he has granted them, to bless others. Every blessing ultimately comes from the Lord, but he chooses to bestow those blessings through his people. He forms them with unique gifts and places them exactly where he wants them to be, all so that they might have the privilege of being channels of his love. He makes them instruments through which he blesses others, be that in the home, the workplace, the church, or the community.

The Lord has formed the professors at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for their privileged work. Not only has he worked Christian faith in their hearts and given them specific talents to use in service to others, he has also provided them experiences in congregations and mission fields throughout North America and in places across the world. Since they

are all pastors by training and experience, the professors know personally the work for which they are preparing others. They have experienced the joys and challenges of serving in gospel ministry. They have witnessed, firsthand, how the Lord graciously works through “jars of clay” (2 Corinthians 4:7) to carry out his ministry. The Lord who formed them for service as pastors aims to work through them to form more pastors who are eager to proclaim his praises to the world.

The Lord has worked in the students at the seminary a desire to be pastors in Christ’s church. Through the Word of God preached in daily chapel services and pondered in every class, the Lord is always at work. He strengthens their faith in his promise of forgiveness and multiplies their joy as the children of God. At the very same time, he increases their commitment to use

everything they have been given for the Lord’s glory and the benefit of others. He forms them to proclaim his praises in the public ministry of the gospel—an extraordinary grace! †

*President Earle Treptow teaches courses in systematic theology.*



listen to their Savior’s voice in his Word, or read it, or reflect on it, the Lord is at work. He’s forgiving their sin, covering them with Christ’s righteousness, and empowering them to be his people. When they receive the body and blood of Christ in, with, and under the bread and the wine in the Lord’s Supper, the Lord frees them from their sin,

# Formed by a Christian Home

I'm not the son of a pastor. My grandpa was not a pastor. My great-grandpa was not a pastor. You get the picture. As a child, I didn't dream about serving in the public ministry. I didn't do mock services in my basement and pretend to preach a sermon. Yet, here I am in my final stretch of school, awaiting Call Day. How did I end up right here, right now?

There is, of course, the obvious answer: the grace of God. That answer is sufficient. But, in his infinite wisdom, our God has chosen to work through people to accomplish his purposes. As I solemnly reflect on his amazing grace in my life, I thank God for the people he has worked through not only to teach me his truths but also to motivate me to pursue the noble calling of being a pastor.

I can thank many people for their influence on me in my life of faith. However, I must make special mention of those in my family. I thank God for my Christian household. Humanly speaking, I can say that I would not be at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary studying to be a pastor if it were not for my parents, brothers, and sister.

My upbringing didn't look like anything special. I was by no means a "super-Christian." We weren't the perfect family. But I did have this incredible blessing: I had parents who understood their extraordinary calling to raise their children in the Lord. They clearly communicated the importance of their faith in Jesus through their life and actions. They made sure that we were in church every single week. There was never a question about whether we would go to church. Actually, there was never a question about which service



we would attend. We were diehard 10:30 service goers. We even had our pew: "front row left transept." Being in God's Word was a clear priority.

I have one distinct memory about this. Growing up in a suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, we were regularly hit by heavy snow. My church had a policy: we don't cancel for snow. My dad had a family policy: if there is church, we will be there. One Sunday, my dad braved the elements and drove us through what must have been about 10 inches of snow. This communicated to me that worship and studying God's Word are important.

Throughout my childhood, my parents not only told me about the love of my Savior; they also showed me his love. They are two of the most honest and generous individuals that I know. It is incredibly influential for a child to see that those bringing them to church are also living their faith at home.



Beyond my parents, I also thank my siblings, who were always willing to discuss real topics—topics that often included our Christian faith. My older siblings set an example for me in their love of their Savior. My twin brother always helped keep me in line when I would falter.

Christian parents, Christian grandparents, and Christian siblings, I leave you with this encouragement: the formation for the ministry starts at home. You don't need to begin some grand program to push your child towards the ministry. Rather, the formation for ministry happens when Christian families stay together in God's Word and serve one another in love. †

*Anthony Pflughoeft recently graduated and was assigned to Christ the Vine, Temecula, California.*



# One Unified Voice

“We praise you, O God, we acclaim you as Lord!” Chills run down my spine. One unified, strong, and hauntingly beautiful voice completely surrounds me. But there are 120 voices that sing—120 who are one body, proudly proclaiming the Lord of life. A real and present model of the very next words, “all creation worships you, Father everlasting!” Where am I? I’m standing at the altar of the seminary chapel, surrounded by its U-shaped formation of chairs filled with men and women singing not merely for beauty or vocal exercise but to declare the faith embedded in their hearts. Those words? The *Te Deum Laudamus*, an ancient song used not only in the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary chapel but in congregations around the globe, as it has been for some 1700 years.

It is my turn to serve as chapel leader. I am nervous, and reasonably so, to feed all those surrounding me with the Word. Those worshipping include classmates who are in the Word daily as well as professors who all were once full-time parish pastors. For a whole week, I had labored over how I could best serve them with the Word. I didn’t realize how much their singing a familiar liturgical hymn would serve me.

After a year worshipping in the gym for social distancing, we were quickly reminded what a blessing we have in our acoustically live and architecturally beautiful chapel. It was good to fill that space with God’s praises throughout the first week. But today is different. Now I stand right in the central spot, where voices of juniors, middlers, seniors, professors, and staff all project. Hearing those voices united in one faith, one proclamation—this day is a small taste of heaven.

Sure, chapel at the seminary allows us all an opportunity to encourage our brothers and grow as preachers. But our chapel is so much more than that. Seminary students have the incredible privilege of days saturated with the Word of



God. We spend class after class mining its depths, applying its precepts, appreciating its amazing news for sinners. Yet, sitting at a table—a laptop before us, powerful programs at our fingertips, assignments filling our workbooks—it can be difficult to appreciate the Word apart from academic exercise. What a blessing, then, that right in the center of our school day, we find the beating heart of seminary life: worship.

The seminary’s one unified voice sings ardently the end of the *Te Deum*: “Come then, Lord, and help your people, bought with the price of your own blood.” Just as we sang the faith we share, so we sing of our universal need for God’s help. That is the essence of our worship; God helps us in our weakness. He serves us through his gospel preached, assures us with forgiveness spoken, reminds us of the baptism we received. We recognize that without him, we wouldn’t be here. We would be without desire and strength to study day after day. We were bought with the price of Christ’s own blood, and that changes everything.

Every day, worship shapes us. The gospel emboldens us to continue hard work. Chapel reminds us, future pastors, that this Word we study, these eternal truths—we need these, too. We *must* be fed by them. We are as reliant on the Lord for salvation and strength as anyone we’ve met or will meet in ministry. Spiritually fed ourselves, we are reminded of the great privilege it is that Christ calls us to feed others. But what’s amazing is that we are still fed even as we give worship! We’re fed as our churches join us in proudly speaking the creeds, confessing need and reliance on God, and singing gospel-rich hymns. As seminary students and pastors, we always want to remember our dependence on God and his grace, as we await the day when he will “bring us with [the] saints to glory everlasting!” †

*Ryan Gurgel is serving as a vicar during the 2022–23 school year at Abiding Grace, Covington, Georgia.*



# Formed by the Parish

**Y**ou never know when one of *those* phone calls will come. I had just wiped the final traces of the reception's prime rib dinner from my mouth, when the phone rang. The caller solemnly summoned me from a banquet hall to a valley of death. She sobbed, "He had a heart attack ... he was so young ... is he really gone?" My pastoral heart quickly cascaded from the joyful atmosphere around me to the sorrowful situation before me. At the end of the day, I was physically and emotionally exhausted, yet gratefully invigorated by work I was privileged to do. I shared living hope in that living room impacted by death. How does a professor teach *these experiences* in a seminary classroom?

A visitor showed up for one of our midweek Lenten services. The text that evening addressed the moments leading up to, during, and after Judas' betrayal. I used a portion of the sermon to touch briefly on suicide and to reflect on the light Christ brings to life's darkest moments. As I greeted the

**"How does a professor teach *these experiences* in the classroom?"**

visitor after worship, she asked if we could talk privately. She unraveled her heart and revealed her struggle. She had been contemplating suicide and was preparing to act. But after driving by our church, she felt prompted to visit. She had come in darkness and rejoiced that she left with the Savior's light. How does a professor teach *these experiences* in a seminary classroom?

For months, we prayed. We planned. We promoted. Now we waited for the

students of our new Jesus Cares Bible study to arrive. Did we have enough materials? To be safe, we printed a few last-minute pages. But then the clock ticked uncomfortably past the starting time and only one arrived. Soon a second student wandered in, and we could not help but wonder, "Is that it? Only two?" But any sort of disappointment disappeared as the students exclaimed on their way out, "This was the best! Thank you for teaching us about Jesus!" Any discouragement dissipated as one volunteer declared, "Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." Another reminded, "Labor in the Lord is never in vain." How does a professor teach *these experiences* in a seminary classroom?

It is challenging to teach parish experience in a classroom because it can only be learned in the parish. Parish experience develops while conducting weddings and while comforting at funerals. Parish experience grows in private conversations and during Bible study preparation. Parish experience increases with each challenge faced, each soul served, and each new day of gospel ministry. How does a professor teach *these experiences* in a seminary classroom? He brings them with him!

The experience we professors gained, we pass along. The experiences God used to form us as pastors who proclaim God's praise, we use to form pastors who will also proclaim God's praise. Parish experience may be difficult to teach in the classroom, but that does not mean it is missing from the classroom. It comes with the professors formed by the parish! 📖

*Professor Joel Russow was installed in February 2022 to teach systematic theology and counseling.*





# What We Have Isn't Normal

**M**y friend's little sister is taking a course at a public university called *Intro to the New Testament*. If its title reflected its actual content, the course would be named *Intro to Why the Bible Is a Lie*. It is clear that the goal of her professor is to snuff out every last flicker of faith. For her, the classroom is a place of utter exhaustion, a desert wilderness where she continually fends off a roaring lion, eager to devour.

I sit in the back corner for an introductory course titled *Old Testament Isagogics*. It is clear that the goal of my professor is to strengthen my faith, build my knowledge, and equip me for a future of doing the same for others. He tells us how he prays for us every day. For me, my classroom is a well. My professors safely shepherd me to drink from its living water each and every morning.

What we have isn't normal.

I've never been all that close to any particular parish pastor throughout my life. I went off to boarding school at the age of fourteen and from then on moved from school to school, church to church, and pastor to pastor. Since childhood, I haven't really had an answer to the question of who "my pastor" is. Throughout my formative years, then, my *pastors* have primarily been my *professors*. I'm not sure if they know just how large a role they have had in forming who I am today. Many of the most impactful moments have come outside of a prescribed lesson.

Our professor ended class a little early the other day. In the front of the room, I saw the tear-welled eyes of a man reminiscing. He was remembering their faces—the faces of those who had succumbed to the temptation that it would be better to take their own lives than to walk another day on this earth. These forty-five minutes weren't about checking boxes or belaboring grandiose concepts. They were about syncing the beats of our hearts to the beat of the pastoral heart before us, one which had been beating for many more years than our own. Ministry was being experienced, not taught. And in that process, this pastor in my classroom inscribed a note on our hearts deeper than any pen on paper could.

This is what it means to be formed for ministry by someone in ministry. This is what it means to have a pastor as a professor. We seminarians see how our professors set aside the job they loved so intimately just so that they could equip us to do that same joyful work instead. We notice that. We value it. What we have isn't normal, and for that,



from the bottom of our hearts, we thank the men who teach us and the God who called them.

My friend's sister continues to sit at the feet of a professor who is anything but her pastor. I occasionally overhear her phone calls of exasperation. How different are the professors at our seminary, like the one who ended class early the other day to bare his pastoral heart. Later that morning—perhaps at the very moment my friend's sister was enduring the attacks of the roaring lion—I got to see that same pastor stand in front of the chapel and proclaim with outstretched arms, "The Lord bless you and keep you."

What we have isn't normal, and for that, I am immensely grateful. †

*Micah Otto is serving as a vicar during the 2022–23 school year at Redeemer, Tucson, Arizona.*



# Behind the Scenes

I'll call them unsung heroes. I know that's cliché. But I want to sing their praises so that they are unsung no more. I'm talking about the seminary support staff. They're the ones who make the seminary run. If our job is to form pastors, theirs is to give us the tools and resources we need. There's so much I could write, but I'll simply give my personal perspective on how they have blessed me this year.

Last June, Dennis Sprenger, our building and grounds director, came to our house for a walk-through, something he does regularly with all 17 faculty homes on campus to see what improvements can be made. Whenever we need a repair, he makes sure it happens. We often see him in the neighborhood, making his rounds and sharing Christian encouragement.

In July, I needed help procuring books for research. Dorcas Tackmier and Brenda Tiefel, our library assistants, helped me get interlibrary loans (and reminded me when it was time to return them).

Last September, I assigned first- and second-year students to local congregations for Early Field Training. Our faculty secretary, Nola Zemlicka, helped me communicate with sixty-plus students and thirty-plus pastors. This spring, she set up payment logistics for students serving as summer assistants around the country. And any time I need copies for class—even at the last-minute—she's on it.

November brought a cheerful visit from our maintenance supervisor, Ted Saxe, to replace our furnace filters and smoke alarm batteries. He was back several times during the year for other repairs. When he moved with his new bride to Tennessee this spring, after 17 years of service, we welcomed his



replacement, Link Gross. He is a regular sight around campus, as is Kay Kieper, our energetic janitorial supervisor, who is always ready with a smile and a question about our kids and pets.

In December, I finalized the budget for a student trip over Winterim to Colombia. Brian Treichel, our business manager, helped with that. He's the supervisor of our staff and takes care of our salary and benefits so that we have nothing to worry about. When I got back from that trip in January, I submitted a report to Carol Puglisi, our accounting director. I appreciate her thoroughness—and her patient reminders to turn in receipts each month.

The beginning of second semester meant new courses to teach. Jeff Mitchell, our technology services director, created new course pages on our seminary network for me and my students. He's our go-to guy for tech questions and problems.

Throughout February and March, Leah Leyrer, the administrative

assistant to the president, worked with us to gather information on students and advisees to share with those assigning vicars and graduates. Her professionalism and institutional memory are invaluable.

On Maundy Thursday, a tree next to our garage started to lean in a wind-storm. Joel Zak, our campus grounds supervisor, was there in no time to anchor it with straps and came back later with his student crew to take it down. He uses his impressive knowledge of vegetation to keep our campus beautiful. He also gave me permission to tap a few maple trees...

...which leads me to Jeannie Goljenboom, our food service director. In April, she graciously lent me pans for cooking sap into syrup. I've never seen her without a smile. The students rave about the delicious food she provides with the help of Nicolette Goodrich and Thomas Millot, who replaced Jim Cook, who passed away suddenly during the year.



# Formed by the Vicar Year

That brings me up to the time of this writing. Our communications coordinator, Barbara Rickaby, will help get this article and the others ready for the magazine. As the administrative assistant for Grow in Grace, our continuing education department, she also helps me keep tabs on my advisees in our masters program. Working with her at Grow in Grace—especially with the ministry anniversary retreats—is Kim Workentine, our marketing and event coordinator.

Another member of the Preach the Word team is Lori Guse. We often see her walking around campus with her camera, capturing the beauty of this place to share in this magazine and online as she serves as a coordinator in the mission advancement office.

The final staff member I'll mention may very well be the one who delivered this magazine to you. Kevin Keller is our mission advancement director, working with those Christians who, with their generous gifts, equip us with the resources we need to keep forming pastors.

This was just a snapshot—one year, one man's perspective. Every member of the seminary family could write an article like this. We professors and students couldn't do our work without the work of our gifted and faithful staff.

Of course, they'd be embarrassed to hear me singing *their* praises like this. They're humble servants who would want you to know that they only do what they do because they want to declare *God's* praise. †

*Professor Sam Degner  
teaches evangelism and  
New Testament courses.*

**W**hat does a pastor look like? What form does he take? The answer varies. It depends on the man's gifts. It depends on his upbringing, on the place in which he serves, and on the people he serves. Pastors strive, as did the apostle Paul, to become all things to all people so that by all possible means they might save some. Paul often changed his approach to ministry, always with the goal of sharing the message of the risen Lord and Savior of all.

That is the goal of all Christians, and specifically the goal of my brothers and me, who at the time of this writing are in the middle of our vicar year. We are each being formed by our congregation, supervising pastor, and community. As I talk to my friends and watch their sermons online, I realize just how different each of us are and how different the people are, from New York City to Houston to just down the road from Mequon. As they navigate managing a schedule and learning the inner workings of a congregation—all while being on their own for the first time or perhaps beginning married life—each one is being formed uniquely for what God has in store for them, wherever he has planned for them to go.

I find myself in a place very different than Mequon, Wisconsin. The people in my community and those I serve look and sound different than I do. Not only that, but their way of thinking does not always line up with the logic I have worked out in my head. Sometimes people

communicate in an

extremely direct way to the point where I feel uncomfortable but must continue as if it were normal. Other times people communicate indirectly to the point where I am not sure I understand the subtext. No doubt there have been times when the message was entirely lost on me. There have been more than a few “smile and nod” moments. All these differences and challenges can be frustrating, but they are key moments in learning the culture and being formed into a minister who understands the concerns of his people and can articulate the gospel in an appropriate and deeply meaningful way.

I'm not alone in this journey, however. I have learned a lot from my supervising pastor, Henry Herrera, from the other local pastor, Tonny Quintero, and from the One Latin America team of missionaries. And my Savior has been guiding me through it all, teaching me humility, which is key to adapting to a new setting and new people. In a year and a half, the men who are now being formed by their vicar year will, God-willing, be receiving calls to serve God's people. Whether that be just down the road or across the globe, a mission start or an established congregation or a school, there will no doubt be challenges and some amount of adaptation needed. But we trust that God goes with us. He is the one who continues to form us for service to him, who himself took the form of a servant for us. †



Zach with his vicar supervisor, Pastor Henry Herrera, and his family.

*Zachary Satorius spent the 2021–22 school year as a  
vicar at Santísima Trinidad in Medellín, Colombia.*





Professors Joel Russow and Paul Waldschmidt were installed during Mission and Ministry in February 2022

WELCOME  
TO THE  
CELEBRATION  
OF MINISTRY  
RETREATS

GROW<sup>IN</sup>  
GRACE  
PARTNERING  
WITH PASTORS



Grow in Grace hosts an annual retreat for pastors who have been in the ministry for 3, 10, 25, and 35 years



During Winterim, some students hit the streets as part of off-campus mission courses



Dr. Benjamin Kohls from Bethany Lutheran College presented at the 2021 Symposium on Pastoral Wellness



Seniors write a thesis and present their work to students and professors





Students enjoy down time in the circle during break



A special service was held to thank God for Professor John Schuetze's 40 years in the pastoral ministry



The Seminary Chorus sang at historic St. John's on the Hillside, Milwaukee, Wisconsin



The Seminary Scurry brings runners and walkers to the campus each spring



One of the chapel window etchings is a scroll that reads, "Search the Scriptures"



# A Long, Winding Path to the Ministry

**A**s a second-career seminary student, I am often asked about what I did for my first career. I struggle with how to respond because there are several answers I could give. Immediately before moving to Wisconsin to begin seminary, I worked in law enforcement at a Christian university in Southern California. Prior to that, I served as a youth pastor at a Chinese American church. Before that, I led worship music for various Baptist, non-denominational, and Evangelical churches. But technically my “first” career was in aerospace engineering.

After graduating from high school in 2007, I enrolled in an aerospace engineering undergraduate program. As an engineer, I hoped to accumulate wealth and thus secure a life of happiness and peace. What about peace with God? That was the last thing on my mind. Sure, I was baptized. I was catechized and confirmed in my faith. But growing up, religion was only something I did for an hour on Sunday. The rest of the week was all about me and getting the most out of my life. Eventually, I stopped going to church altogether. Besides, Jesus was for the weak. I, on the other hand, was not weak. I prided myself in having the fortitude to keep far from alcohol, drugs, sex, and other vices. So even though I had left the church, I thought God must be pleased with me.

In reality, I was blind to my sin and could not see my need for Jesus. But in his mercy, he saw me. At the height of my arrogance, the Lord humbled me by tearing down the walls of my little Jericho of a life. The people I thought could never fail me did fail me. My trust was betrayed by those closest to me. I became weak and vulnerable. And my self-made idols offered me no comfort or peace. Amazingly, the God



I refused to hear heard my cry. After a season of soul searching, I found myself sitting in a pew in a Baptist church, listening to a man talk about his Savior. He spoke of Christ as if the whole world could be taken away from him and yet he would still have peace. As I sat there, I found myself wanting what he had. It was not the clearest gospel I would ever hear preached, but through the Word I heard my Savior calling me to repentance and faith. And the more I heard, the more I wanted to tell others.

The Lord then led me down a long, winding path of preparing to become a pastor. I left my engineering studies to begin undergraduate pastoral training at an Evangelical (Reformed) university in Southern California. However, an interesting thing happened. By the time I finished my graduate studies, my understanding of Christ and the gospel had deepened, and I soon realized I could no longer stay within the Evangelical church and

remain faithful to Scripture. I wanted to belong to a church that focuses more on Christ’s objective forgiveness than on my own subjective feelings; that emphasizes what Christ has done for us rather than what we do for him; that centers everything on the doctrine of justification by faith alone. God be praised, I found such a church in the WELS!

After my wife and I became members of King of Kings in Garden Grove, California, I spoke with my pastor, Timothy Wempner, about my desire to enter the ministry. He quickly put me in touch with Prof. Allen Sorum at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Because of my prior studies and family situation, he graciously arranged for me to fulfill my pre-seminary training remotely. I am thankful I could continue to provide for my wife and children as I took classes online and with my pastor in my spare time. In God’s providence, I even had the privilege to study Scripture in Greek with former seminary professor David Valleskey, who was serving in retirement at Beautiful Savior in Carlsbad, California. Once I completed the prerequisite courses, my wife, two children, and I packed up our belongings and made the long journey from California to Wisconsin. In the fall of 2019, I finally began classes at our seminary. It was not easy leaving everything I knew and everyone I loved behind. It was not easy to leave a stable career to enroll in seminary for a second time. But the way of the cross is never easy. And if my cross means others will hear about the cross of their Savior, then that is a burden I will gladly bear. †

*Erik Alair served as a vicar during the 2021–22 school year at St. Jacobi, Greenfield, Wisconsin.*



# Shaped by Brotherhood

**B**rothers!" I vividly remember hearing that word over and over again on our class trips to the seminary during my college years. Everywhere we went on campus, the seminarians would call us "brothers." At first it seemed kind of strange. I wondered whether or not this fraternal affection was genuine. However, after spending a bit of time at the seminary, I quickly became convinced that "brothers" is the perfect way to describe the people who go through seminary with you. They love you; they genuinely care for you; they're always there for you.

Classmates at the seminary are like brothers in that they go through a lot together. They work hard to complete a rigorous academic program. They preach their first sermons to one another. They get to share with each other the joys and challenges of their first tastes of ministry. Seminary students also find some time for fun together—playing games, talking, and joking late into the evening on occasion. By the end of their time together at seminary, these classmates have grown into respectable, godly men who are ready to step into congregations and serve as pastors. All these shared experiences create a camaraderie among classmates that carries on for a long time after graduation has passed.



Once Call Day arrives, classmates are sent out all over the country, even around the world. My class—the class of 2014—maintains a Google Map that plots out the location where each classmate currently serves. As I look at that map, I feel a connection to each of those ministries, even though I've never visited most of them. I pray that they will be blessed through my brothers' service. When my classmates deliberate calls, I get excited as I think about the ways that God can and will use them in whichever ministry they decide to serve. No matter where my classmates are now, I genuinely care about them and pray for them, and I know they do the same for me.

When I'm having a rough day in ministry, I know that I can always call

one of my classmates to talk to someone who will understand what I'm going through. Most of my class got together after three years of ministry for a retreat in San Antonio, Texas. We began by sharing some blessings and challenges that we had experienced in ministry. It was neat to hear all the great things that God had accomplished through these men. It was also helpful to hear that many of them were dealing with challenges that weren't all that different from mine. It reminded me that I'm not in this alone. God has been so good to me that he's given me a group of men who will always be there for me to support and encourage me when things get tough.

I went to the seminary because I wanted to serve as a pastor to proclaim God's Word to a world that needs to hear it. I'm grateful that the seminary prepared me to do that. If that were all I had gotten out of seminary, I couldn't complain. But the seminary gave me so much more. It helped develop some of my best and most supportive friendships—relationships I will continue to enjoy for years to come. I thank God that the seminary brought these blessings into my life. †

*Pastor Tyler Shinnick serves at Martin Luther, Neenah, Wisconsin.*





# Forming Pastors in Other Cultures

By the grace of God, the Lord is still using me to proclaim His praise at the age of 75 years. Like the apostle Paul, who said, “what I received, I passed on,” I have been given so much to pass on. Now the Lord has brought a Sudanese man, Khan Turuok, into my life. His desire to serve the Sudanese community both in America and in Africa has led him into the Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) program.

Let me take you back 51 years to when I was assigned as a vicar to San Jose, California. I arrived late in August to begin my work at Apostles Lutheran Church. One specific area I was given to focus on was the outreach ministry of the mission congregation, guided by my supervising pastor, David Valleskey. He had a stack of 3x5-inch note cards that seemed over a foot high of names and addresses from a canvass held before I arrived. Following up on all those names would be my task that year. However, before I would make my first call, Pastor Valleskey took me along on an evangelism call. There we visited a couple who had some contact with the congregation. During that visit, pastor turned the conversation to their spiritual life and God’s expectations of them. As he presented the law of God with its full impact, tears ran down their cheeks. What followed was the most beautiful presentation of the gospel, which dried their tears and brought relief to their hearts. I left that house with a personal reflection of how blessed I had been knowing the gospel all my life. I had something I had to share. My time with Pastor Valleskey helped form my faith and ministry.

Some 50 years later, my life and Khan’s life intersected. I visited my home congregation of St. Mark in Mankato, Minnesota, which my father had started. Their pastor, Keith Siverly, had built bridges with the Sudanese community. I wondered if the Sudanese members there had family ties in Rochester, Minnesota, where I am retired. Would it be possible to expand the outreach into Rochester? At a meeting in the church office, Pastor Siverly introduced me to Khan, who had just started his PSI instruction. In the days that followed, Pastor Siverly took a call to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the PSI team asked me to serve as Khan’s instructor.

A special blessing of being a PSI instructor is gaining an appreciation for what the students have gone through to get to the United States. Khan was no exception. War-torn South Sudan was not a safe place for him as a young man. Walking barefoot by night for fourteen days while hiding during the day, he was finally able to get out of Sudan to a refugee camp in Ethiopia. It was the beginning of his journey to America. His wife, Martha, had a more tragic situation. Her family was also living in South Sudan. Her father was a Christian pastor. One day, a warring group came to their village. Her father pleaded to spare his family but take him. She was five years old when she last saw her father. Finally, she got to America, too. Together, Martha and Khan bring a deep appreciation for God’s working in their lives and a desire to share the gospel.



Khan attends the youth confirmation service of South Sudanese friends at St. Mark, Mankato, Minnesota.





Khan, Pastor Marcus Birkholz, and Pastor Stephen Meyer enjoy lunch and fellowship together.

Another special part of ministry is when pastors and wives gather together to share time and stories. This is also a time when we can encourage one another to keep going. Whether over dinner at a restaurant or around a dining room table, my pastor, Stephen Meyer, who is the new chairman of the Global South Sudanese Committee, his wife, my wife, and I have had time with Khan and Martha. Along with instruction, listening, learning, sharing, and encouraging are all part of the PSI program. It's a long journey. What a blessing it is when Christians can encourage one another!

As there are many facets of the Christian ministry, so our seminary has established a PSI program with a balanced approach. Starting with the first year, training to be an evangelist includes courses on the Confessions, Old and New Testament Bible history, and preparation to present a devotion with law and gospel. Khan and I have also worked on the practical side together. With his ties to the Sudanese community, we have made evangelism calls together in Rochester. In some cases, he has had to do all the translating. Before we enter the house, we ask for God's blessing, and when we are back at the car, we give thanks for the visit. Since I live in Rochester, home to a leading medical center, we have also had opportunities to make hospital calls together. While on calls, Khan is able to build bridges both to the patients and to ones visiting the patients. He makes sure to get their names and phone numbers to follow up with them. Because of his ability to reach into the community, we are planning a couple of children's baptisms.

Our congregation has a Good Samaritan Committee to help care for the physical needs of individuals. Khan was able to gather the names of children from four families and get their sizes for clothing and ideas for toys. Christmas gifts were purchased, and Khan then had the privilege of delivering them to these Sudanese families in our community. Khan has expressed great appreciation for how our congregation reaches out and welcomes those from the Sudanese community.

By the grace of God, Khan and I have been able to study God's Word and share that same grace with others. I pray that God uses our time together to help form his faith and ministry for many years of proclaiming God's praise! 📖

*Marcus Birkholz is a retired pastor who lives in Rochester, Minnesota and currently serves as the supervising pastor for Khan Turuok, a South Sudanese PSI student who lives in Mankato, Minnesota.*

More information on PSI and the work being carried out can be found here: [www.wisluthsem.org/pastoral-studies-institute](http://www.wisluthsem.org/pastoral-studies-institute).

The Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) is a collaborative effort between the WELS Joint Mission Council and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. In short, PSI exists to "walk with kingdom-committed spiritual leaders worldwide." This work can take many different forms, both domestically and abroad. Much of PSI's work in North America involves men like Khan, who have been identified as leaders within a specific people group and desire to study for the pastoral ministry. In these cases, PSI works to provide teachers and oversee a training program that allows the individual to receive pastoral training while continuing to work within his individual ministry context.



Internationally, PSI is integrated with each of our WELS World Mission teams, serving as a resource for their educational efforts. PSI's role is varied and can include coordinating both visiting and online teachers, offering programmatic and curricular consultation, and providing resources for the training of national church leaders who will serve as strong voices for confessional Lutheranism among their people.



# Prepared for the Parsonage

I'm not a pastor's kid. I graduated from a non-WELS high school. I'm not from the Midwest, and I'm an introvert. So, as I consider my recent transition to the parish life, I'm asking myself, "Did anything prepare me to be a pastor's wife?" My gut reaction is, "No, nothing can really prepare you for this!" But there is something that has helped me. I've learned to *stay connected*—to my husband, to church, to other pastors' wives, and to my Savior.

Staying connected to your husband is a given for all wives, but in the past few years my husband and I have seen more and more the importance of nurturing our relationship. During vicar year, I had a bit of a trial run with being a pastor's wife, and we learned to communicate better with each other and be more intentional with our time together. I also learned to adjust my expectations of him—of his free time, what he was able to share with me, etc. There were some growing pains, certainly, but I get to see how much of a blessing he is to the people he serves. And I get to discover how I can be a blessing to those people too!

Here is something I have heard that has really stuck with me: *your role as the pastor's wife is not a called position*. As a member of the church, I can look to serve in ways that fit my God-given abilities, time, and interests. One thing that helped me was being actively involved in church before ever marrying a pastor. At my home congregation and through mission trips in high school and college, I discovered the joy of working with kids and leading singing in worship. I was challenged by my parents and other mentors to push beyond my comfort zone and embrace activities like canvassing. Being an active church member not only helped me appreciate my future church members' perspective, but it also gave me the chance to get to know the wives of pastors and see how they serve.



The most practical help I've received has come through my connection to other pastors' wives. They can be an invaluable source of emotional and spiritual support. I have been blessed to know and be inspired by my best friend's mom, my mother-in-law, the pastor's wife during my husband's vicar year, and wonderful friends who are married to pastors. There are so many amazing women to connect with who are either currently experiencing the same joys and woes or have many more years of wisdom to share.

Most importantly, I know I need to stay connected to my Savior. Getting to know our congregation, I have found new motivation to be in the Word consistently, in both group and private settings. I can be a spiritual support for my husband, whether it is in helping him face challenges or just helping him bounce around sermon ideas. I can be a spiritual encourager and leader for other women in the congregation. I can be a faithful witness at my workplace or at the gym.

In whatever I face in my role as a pastor's wife, I know I can go to my God in his Word for peace.

I've learned that being a pastor's wife doesn't mean I have to be involved in everything. It doesn't mean I am a mediator between members and my husband. It doesn't mean I must have perfectly-behaved children. Instead, I aim to fulfill *all* my God-given vocations to the best of my ability. I aim to love and support my husband the best I can and ask him to do the same for me. I will look for ways to serve, both in the church and in the community. God has equipped each of us with unique gifts, and they will all be useful for growing his kingdom! †

*Megan Plocher's husband Micah is pastor at Trinity, Nicollet, Minnesota.*





# Formed through Trials

When my wife Lauren and I were choosing a text for our recent wedding, we wanted something to cling to. We wanted something to hold near to our hearts as we face the inevitable struggles of life together. We wanted something beautiful.

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us” (Romans 5:1-5).

That might seem like a lot to dig into for a wedding text. When I told my brother what our wedding text was going to be, he gave me an unexpected response: “So, you want to have a sad wedding?” But there’s a reason we chose those words. We find in these words the glory of our suffering as children of God.

Some aspects of the gospel seem to touch specific hearts in special ways. Being called a child of God is one of

those for me. At a young age, my childhood became anything but glorious. When I was seven, my parents divorced. As many know, the consequences of divorce can continue for a lifetime. There are broken relationships all throughout my family. I was separated from siblings through family court. I was separated from my mother because of her addiction. Even spiritually my family is divided. How could all this hurt lead to hope?

Somehow that sixth-grade boy, forbidden to go to a WELS church until his junior year of high school, kept his childhood dream in mind: “I want to be a WELS pastor when I grow up!” There are many reasons I could point to for my desire to become a pastor from a young age. My pastor showed me how a shepherd loves like Jesus. God poured out his love through him in the middle of a world turned upside down. God’s Word was always my favorite class in school. Jesus was the most important thing in the world to me. There is one reason why I was able to get through the struggles of my childhood. There is one reason why I want to be a pastor more than anything in the world—God’s love has been poured out into my heart through the Holy Spirit.

Fast forward many years and that little boy finds himself along the path

towards living his dream. I came to the seminary in the middle of a pandemic. After a semester of online learning at Martin Luther College capped off with a virtual graduation, I was ready for a fresh start. My first semester at the seminary was a four-month stretch I will never forget: translating forty verses of Greek each night, becoming engaged to the love of my life, and receiving the heartbreaking news that my mother had passed away from the alcohol that had long ago separated a momma’s boy from his momma. Like others, I have faced many trials and tribulations. This world brings pain and suffering to our sinful lives here on earth. In fact, Jesus promised life will be this way. But losing my mom was by far the most difficult trial I have ever faced.

What happened next? I came back to class and filled my eyes and ears with God’s Word. My soul, thirsty for strength and comfort, was quenched with the water of life. God gave me suffering; he gave me perseverance; he gave me character; he gave me hope. I was surrounded by loving brothers and professors who lifted me up. I was fed by Jesus each day in chapel and devotion. I did my homework for Genesis. I did my homework for 2 Corinthians. The love of God was poured out into my heart through the Holy Spirit! In Jesus, the inexplicable becomes simple. I thank God for every single hardship he has blessed me with. God doesn’t call servants who are experts at getting through life on their own. He strengthens his children to trust and rely fully on him. I pray that one day God might use the struggles I’ve faced in life to serve that little lost child who, despite the trials of this world, loves Jesus with all his heart. †

*Clayton Fury is serving as a vicar during the 2022–23 school year at Christ, Denver, Colorado.*

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# A Matter of Perspective

**D**o you ever think about what it would be like to go back and relive a portion of your younger days? Everybody's experience growing up is different, of course. But many who have crested the hill of the decades and now find themselves gaining speed on the downward slope might find it appealing to go back to a time in life when there was a little less responsibility, a time when they could move a little more nimbly, a time when they could eat whatever was set before them without having to dread the numbers on the scale or the results of a cholesterol test.

Some folks have asked me lately if I feel like I'm reliving my younger days. You see, when a new professor is getting started at the seminary, they have him audit the courses he might teach down the road. So, I'm a student again, at least for a little bit. After a long time standing in front of classrooms, the new perspective is different, but it's enjoyable.

It's not an entirely new perspective for me. Through the Grow in Grace program, God has richly blessed parish pastors with opportunities to temporarily be students again, something I was



able to do for many years. When they come back to the seminary classroom, whether that classroom is on campus, online, or at a satellite location, pastors who have been the teachers of Bible studies, new member classes, and the catechism get to see things from a student's perspective again.

But that's not the only change in perspective that's taken place in them.

Our pastors come back to the classroom with the changed perspective that comes from experience. They come

back having known the undeserved joy of stepping into a pulpit every Sunday. They come back as men who've counseled the crushed and brought comfort to the grieving. They've smelled the Easter lilies at a sunrise service and have proclaimed "He is risen!" They come back, grateful to God because he has allowed them to be pastors even though experience has now made them very aware of their shortcomings. They have the God-blessed confidence that comes from experience and the God-blessed humility that also comes from experience. They come back knowing how much they don't know, and that makes them highly motivated.

Adult learning pioneer Malcolm Knowles referred to this as the student's "readiness to learn." For example, I never cared all that much about the mechanical inner workings of my car's passenger side window. After all, it worked. I had no need to care. But when my car window got stuck open in February in Wisconsin, you can bet that I was instantly on YouTube, trying to figure out how to fix it. I was suddenly "ready to learn" because a real-life situation had shown me the need.





Pastors approach continuing education with the same readiness to learn. Maybe they've been through or are currently in the middle of a tricky counseling situation. Maybe they see young people disconnecting more and more from faith and the church. Maybe they recognize there's a need to refresh their sermon writing skills or to learn new teaching skills. Or maybe their interest is elevated simply because they've learned *how much more there is to learn* when it comes to church history or Biblical languages or systematic theology. They've seen the need in a real-life situation and, therefore, they are motivated to learn.

One of the challenges of training future pastors is that seminary students don't have the benefit of "readiness to learn"—if we're going by Knowles' definition. Don't misunderstand. They are serious about their studies and are eager to learn the skills necessary for the parish ministry. But what they haven't yet experienced, through no fault of their own, is the *need*, a gap in their knowledge, brought to light in a real-life situation, which stirs the urgency, the immediacy, the readiness to learn. The parish pastor is ready to learn and then can go home and immediately apply what he's learned to his ministry. That *context* makes continuing education a rich blessing both for him and his people.

You might think that finding a gap in your knowledge is a bad thing. We all like to know how to handle a situation when it arises or how to answer a question when asked. We want to appear competent in every way. Pastors want that, too. But as you've probably figured out by now, realizing how much he doesn't know is one of the most valuable lessons for a pastor to learn.

So, fellow pastors, if you're aware of your ignorance, congratulations! Thank



God for that realization—it is true wisdom. And please know that there's a seat for you in continuing education at the seminary. You will bring with you a perspective that you couldn't have had the first time you were here. And you will gain additional perspective by learning together with your brothers in the parish ministry.

Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to "encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact [they were] doing" (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Today, continuing education is a chance for brothers who have experienced the rigors of life in the parish to sit side by side and "build each other up" for their important work. This *collaboration* still exists in online courses as well! When a pastor hears about the experiences of his brothers, he can be encouraged by what the Lord of the Church is doing around the world. And he can be built up through what his brothers bring to class discussion. One adds an insight he hadn't thought of. Another applies a point in a way that hadn't occurred to him. The collaboration of continuing education offers him a broader perspective while also benefitting his work at home.

Why take a continuing education course from Grow in Grace when a pastor has

access to a wealth of materials on his office bookshelves and online for free? Self-directed learning is indeed vital and to be highly commended. Some of us, though, need a more intentional commitment. We benefit from the structure and discipline of a formal learning situation. With so many demands on the schedule and so many potential distractions lurking, a course with a planned-out agenda and defined learning targets is just what many of us require. Don't forget one additional perspective that is brought to a seminary classroom—that of the professor who knows the material well and has spent many hours preparing to share it.

While the prospect of going back to relive your younger years might be fun to consider, most of us would probably prefer to hold on to the wisdom and perspective that God has given us over the years. With continuing education, a pastor gets the best of both worlds. He gets to look at the Holy Scriptures both as bright-eyed student *and* with eyes informed by the years. That is a blessed perspective. †

*Paul Waldschmidt was installed in February 2022 to teach education and Old Testament classes.*



# Caring for the Temple

There are times when you need to care for yourself before you can care for others. It could be called the oxygen mask rule. On an airplane, you are told to put your mask on first before helping others with theirs. This principle also applies to mental health care. As pastors, we need to care for our own mental health. Otherwise, we won't be able to help others.

At Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), we are *proactive* in helping students maintain good mental health. Each year we spend several class periods educating incoming students on how to care for their own mental health. Since the mind, body, and soul all work together, students are encouraged to maintain good spiritual health by spending time in God's Word and prayer. This helps nourish the soul. They are encouraged to get regular exercise, a good night's sleep, and eat a healthy diet. This helps maintain the body.

They are also taught practices that can help them with their mental health. Examples would include focusing on a thankfulness attitude (we have a gracious and generous God), replacing negative thought patterns with positive ones, positive self-talk (e.g., I am a redeemed child of God), limiting the use of smart phones and social media, and being engaged in a hobby or other enjoyable pastime. Whether these things focus on the mind, body, or soul, they all help students maintain good mental health.

Nonetheless, we all know that we live in challenging times. The COVID-19 pandemic added a layer of anxiety to our daily lives. The news media brings images of disasters to our devices the moment they happen. Social media creates an unrealistic picture of our lives and the lives of others. And the list goes on. WLS students are not immune. These things affect them also and can result in mental health struggles.



At the seminary, we are also *reactive* in helping students who face mental health challenges. Among the most common struggles are anxiety and depression. As the president, the dean of students, or the faculty advisors meet with students, they assess for mental health. When the need arises, the students are referred to the campus counselor for further assessment. When needed, he will refer students to a professional counselor who can help them move toward healing and give them skills to maintain good mental health. The seminary covers the cost of this counseling. This applies not only to seminary students but also to their wives, families, and fiancées. Each year students who seek mental health services express appreciation for the program and the help it gives them.

Students with good mental health are better equipped to serve others in the ministry. The seminary equips students to provide pastoral care and counsel for those they serve. This includes courses taught during the second and fourth years. As they prepare for the vicar year, the focus is on strengthening listening skills because good care begins

with good listening; understanding some of the signs of child abuse and knowing how and when to make a report; and knowing how to minister to the sick, the straying, the bereaved, the incarcerated, those in the military, and those facing difficult medical decisions. They also learn about the unique challenges of ministering to God's people at a time of suicide.

In the final year of seminary training, students have two courses that focus on pastoral counseling skills. These courses teach the importance of counseling within one's area of expertise. This means that, as counseling pastors, they

address the spiritual needs of the people they counsel and refer to mental health professionals as the need arises. They also learn about a wide variety of mental health disorders. This education does not equip them to counsel in mental health. Rather, it enables them to recognize various mental health disorders and unhealthy relationships and get people the help they need. This help is important because mental illness can affect a person's spiritual life in significant ways. It can alter the way they hear the law and the gospel. It can change the way they understand sin and grace. It can separate them from both the Head—Christ—and the body—fellow believers.

At the seminary we teach the five "Ts" of stewardship. Besides time, treasure, talents, and trees (God's creation), we focus on our temple. Our mind-soul-body is a gift from God that he asks us to care for, since it is this temple that we use to serve him and others. †

*Professor John Schuetze teaches classes in systematic theology and practical theology, especially counseling, and serves as campus counselor.*



# The Little Lighthouse

Five-year-olds are easily impressed by novel things. Kindergarten Sunday school was my first big impression of Jesus and his guiding love. On a child's 5th birthday in the early 1950s, our Lutheran kindergarten Sunday school would bring out a tabletop lighthouse bank, where the celebrant would insert one penny into the little lighthouse for each birthday year. The five pennies I put in made the little lighthouse light shine brightly as the class sang. The message was clear to all. Just as the lighthouse light shines brightly for ships in the night, Jesus is our shining light, guiding and loving us every day. Such fun for this five-year-old who would never forget the little shining light, the simple act of giving pennies, and coming to know the love of Jesus!

Some 70 years later, that little lighthouse memory still sticks with me. It was an effective object lesson that grew and matured over the years into the realization of God's continuing love and my response to that love. So many blessings are seen in hindsight, but was my response there? Did I show gratitude and thankfulness in meaningful ways? Maybe not fully at first, but as I matured as a Christian man, my response to his love matured as well.

Looking back into my childhood, I see my father providing well for our family and yet able to give faithfully every Sunday to our church. He was thankful for his family and his work and was a faithful giver to the work of the church. His steady response in love was a lifetime example for me.

With another look back, I see the blessings of my education, my family, my grand-kiddos, and always the blessings of God's Word. I see many loving pastors in years past, so dedicated, hardworking, and absolutely fixated on preaching and teaching the truth in God's word. How could I not respond to all of this but in generous ways? The "how" was

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Visitors for Friends of the Seminary Day tour the campus.

accomplished over the years by financial support, serving as an elder, serving in other church offices, and providing Christian leadership in my church roles. The fruit of this work was my joy. It was all a product of God's love; I took action in response.

In early August 2010, I made my first visit to our seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. We were led on a tour of the campus by an individual who explained the strenuous academic year of our seminarians. He noted the costs of tuition and that many students work at various part-time jobs to help pay their way. That day the campus was almost vacant of people, with just a few working. We looked into the seminary chapel where daily worship services were held. The lights were off, but sunlight flowed through the windows, brightly shining on the chapel. It was a reminder to me of that bright shining light of the little lighthouse so many years ago, now coming full circle in my life. It was a joyous realization that prompted the question, "Could I generously help here?" With what was seen and heard there that day, I knew that I could, with God's help, be a financial contributor to the student body. With prayer and reflection on all my blessings, I made my first annual seminary gift in 2010 towards the financial needs of the students. I have been blessed to be able to give every academic year since then.

It's all about Jesus—his love and our loving response to him. †

*This article was written by an  
anonymous seminary supporter  
from the South Atlantic District.*





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