



Κηρυξάτε

A MAGAZINE OF WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

PREACH THE GOSPEL

ALIVE AND GROWING

2025 VOL. 22



2025–26 EVENTS

AUGUST 20	Opening Service
SEPTEMBER 22	WLS Alumni Society Annual Meeting
SEPTEMBER 22–23	WLS Symposium
OCTOBER 4	Friends of the Seminary Day
DECEMBER 14	Christmas Concert
JANUARY 5–16	Winterim
FEBRUARY 3–5	Mission and Ministry
MAY 21	Call Day and Graduation Concert
MAY 22	Graduation



EDITOR'S NOTE

Many of this issue's articles feature the ways the seminary is alive and growing. Foremost is the growth of spiritual life worked by the Holy Spirit. But that's not all—life and growth in friendships, in ministry skills, in support for the seminary's mission, on the campus grounds—in these ways and more, thanks to our living and life-giving God, the seminary continues to live and grow.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- † Thank you to the authors who contributed to this issue.
- † Special thanks to Lori Donehey, who serves as mission advancement coordinator and provided all seminary photographs, and to Barbara Rickaby, the seminary's communications coordinator.

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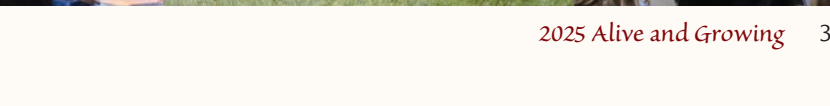
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A Place to Grow

“Before and after” pictures often tell a powerful story of transformation.

On the left might be a picture of a shy four-year-old girl holding on to her mother’s leg, while on the right is that same girl at her college graduation, ready to take on the world. Maybe the “before” picture shows a scrawny freshman boy in danger of being bowled over by a sudden gust of wind. The “after” picture reveals a fit, muscular senior for whom work in the weightroom made a major difference.

It might be nice to have “before and after” pictures to demonstrate the growth seminarians experience. There are some “before and after” pictures that could be used. Each student has his picture taken during orientation and then again for graduation. The students who arrive on campus as 22-year-olds look a little different when they leave as 26-year-olds. The pictures demonstrate their physical maturation.

What doesn’t show up in those pictures is their growth in many other areas: in their knowledge of the Scriptures, in their faith in Christ, and in their skill in serving God’s people with God’s saving word. The “before and after” is striking, a testament to the Spirit’s powerful working.

Their graduation pictures do not indicate how much they have grown in their knowledge of God’s Word. One might almost expect to see in each of their pictures a bulging cranium, given the time each student spends digging into the Scriptures. The curriculum calls for them to study several books of the Bible in painstaking detail, in Hebrew and Greek. They work their way through Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah 40–66, Galatians, Ephesians, and Romans with special thoroughness, examining individual words and phrases as well as literary structure. Students cover every book of the Bible during their preparation for ministry, whether at Martin Luther College or the seminary. Well over one-third of the credit hours in the seminary curriculum are dedicated to the study of the books of the Bible. The seminary catalog aptly says that “thorough, intensive, and reverent study of the Holy Scriptures is the very heart of seminary training.”

Seminary students build on their study of the individual books of Scripture through an in-depth study of Christian doctrine during their three years on campus. In systematic theology courses, which bring together the Bible passages addressing a particular teaching, they consider what God wants them to believe and teach. For instance, they look at



verses from many different sections that speak about baptism, whether the institution of the sacrament in Matthew 28:19, or the blessings of baptism in Acts 2:38, Titus 3:5–7, and 1 Peter 3:21, or its purpose in daily life in Romans 6. After grounding themselves in what the Lord teaches about baptism, they then consider common false teachings about it, whether that’s the rejection of infant baptism or the idea that baptism is merely an outward ceremony that cannot be a means by which the Lord forgives sin. They gain a clear and comprehensive understanding of the truths of God’s Word upon which they can continue to build throughout their lives.

During their time on campus seminarians also learn how Christians who have gone before them have confessed the truth of Scripture in their time. They study, for instance, how Christians in the fourth century responded to Arianism, which taught that Jesus was a creation of God and therefore distinct from God. The Nicene Creed was the church’s response to that heresy, confessing powerfully and poetically that Jesus is “God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father.” Students also grow in their understanding of how their Lutheran forebears confessed scriptural truth against the false teachings present in the visible church during the Reformation era. Confident that the Lutheran Confessions are an accurate exposition of the teachings of Scripture, students promise to preach and teach in conscious agreement with these statements of faith. Church history courses help future pastors see how the Lord guides all things in service of his gracious plan to gather his people through the gospel.

Each student grows tremendously in his understanding of God’s Word during his time on campus. That growth

comes not only through coursework but also through personal devotional reading and daily chapel services. Students, faculty, and staff gather each morning to sit at Jesus’ feet and be fed. While knowledge of God’s Word is being increased, something else is also happening. The Spirit is at work in the hearts of his people. Through the living and active word proclaimed in classroom and chapel, the Lord causes faith in Christ to grow. Finally, faith is at the heart of ministry. As the Lord keeps his promise to strengthen faith through his gospel, he forms men for service as pastors. Only those who cling desperately to God’s grace for them in Christ and who marvel at his goodness in rescuing them, though undeserving sinners, are equipped to share it with others.

Seminarians also grow significantly in their skill in serving God’s people with God’s Word. Through counseling classes, they learn how to listen to the hurting and to draw them out and then how to apply the truths of Scripture to the individual’s situation. Evangelism classes help future pastors grow in their ability to share the gospel in a meaningful way with those who do not know Christ and to engage the community in which the Lord places them. Students grow in their proficiency as teachers of confirmation students, young people, and adults through education courses and opportunities to teach. Courses in worship and preaching during each year on campus provide students the chance to gain both understanding and skill in an important aspect of a pastor’s ministry to the saints.

While the three years in the classroom learning from professors who have served as pastors are essential to the formation of future pastors, the vicar year plays a critical role. Under the supervision of a gospel-centered pastor, a vicar gets to put into practice what he has learned. He gets to see what pastoral ministry looks like day after day. Preaching 20–25 sermons during that year, regularly teaching confirmation classes and adult Bible classes, actively reaching out to the community and following up on visitors, observing his supervising pastor lead a congregation and equip the saints for service, and having in-depth conversations with his supervising pastor make all the difference for a pastor-in-training. There’s nothing quite like experience to help a person grow in pastoral skill and confidence. Faculty members regularly comment on how different the men are after a year of full-time ministry.

The seminary is a place to grow. Students grow in their knowledge of God’s Word. They grow in their faith in Jesus as their Righteousness and Life. They grow in their skill in ministering to and with God’s holy people. Students leave the campus prepared for a lifetime of ministry and a lifetime of learning. While the “before and after” pictures may not reveal much change, the reality is different. During the students’ time at the seminary the Lord transforms them and equips them for pastoral ministry. †

Earle Treptow serves as president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and teaches courses in systematic theology.



Growing while Shining the Light of Christ

Lighthouse Youth Center (Lighthouse) is a non-profit organization that provides a central location for children ages 10–18 to grow academically, socially, and spiritually. Lighthouse consists of four campuses in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and one in Appleton, Wisconsin, open year-round Monday through Friday. The mission of Lighthouse's almost 20-year-old ministry is this: “to be a beacon of Christ to the youth of the community.” What does that look like for a seminary student who works as a campus vicar at the Lighthouse Youth Center, and why do I love it so much?

One answer: it's ministry.

The tasks I am privileged to carry out at Lighthouse are truly a blessing and a joy for me. If you asked one of the kids what my job is, there could be a comedic array of answers. In truth, the kids and I probably see my job in quite different ways. Some might say I'm the vicar that they can't beat at NBA 2K, a popular basketball video game. I would say that I'm getting quality one-on-one time in a comfortable setting with someone who might not usually be open to deeper conversations. Maybe they would tell you it feels like my only job is to try to be funny all day. If that's the case, then I praise God that I can help to create an enjoyable environment for an afternoon with friends. Maybe they would label me as the guy who helps them with homework, the guy who delivers their daily devotions, or the guy who prays with them before they leave for the day. I would love it if that was the

answer. Really, I think their answer would be summed up as this: I watch them grow mentally and spiritually, and I get the chance to assist in that process in any way I am able. By the work of the Spirit through the Word, by grace alone, there is certainly growth taking place.



This might sound funny, but honestly, the one growing the most at Lighthouse is me. While it is my job to be a beacon, to shine the perfect light of Jesus Christ to a world of darkness, here I am daily with forty lights shining the joy of a risen Savior back at me. As they grow, I grow. I grow as I sit in the front row while the Holy Spirit works through the means of grace and makes faith in their young hearts not only grow but completely flourish. I get to watch one teenager wander into Lighthouse and the next day bring back a handful of friends who have no clue what Lutheran

means or what Lighthouse is all about. Before the month is over, I am being asked curious theological questions every day because these girls don't want to stop learning about Jesus and don't go to a school that teaches about him. I get to sit and watch a boy who just moved into the neighborhood

come into Lighthouse in the summer knowing nobody and by the end of the summer, enroll in the Lutheran elementary school and be cherished and embraced. I get to encourage grade schoolers to use their gifts to serve their Lord in so many different ways as they enter high school. At Lighthouse, Jesus shines on all of us and we look to reflect that light. He even counts me worthy to be a bearer of that light. What a joy that is. †

Caleb Lindholm is serving as a vicar during the 2025–2026 school year. Learn more about Lighthouse at lighthouseyouthcenter.com

Seminary Student Wives: A Family of Friends

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV) says, “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up.” There's a special group of people gathering at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary doing just that—the seminary wives! This group includes ladies married to junior, middler, and senior students at the seminary. We have the unique opportunity to grow alongside each other for three years while our husbands are studying on campus (we miss you, vicar wives!). Time at the seminary is short and goes by in the blink of an eye. Yet, blessings abound thanks to our seminary student wives group and the lifelong connections we make.

Each year, there is a small group of wives representing the three on-campus classes that plans gathering opportunities for the wives and fiancées of seminary students. I am blessed to serve the other wives of the seminary in this way. With oversight from a couple of seminary professors, we are encouraged to offer opportunities for all seminary wives to grow together however we see fit. The seminary wives meet once a month for fellowship and fun during the school year, and each gathering looks different! You can find us picking apples at the local orchard, exchanging Christmas cookies at the seminary, painting at one of our homes, or drinking coffee at the local cafe. During this time, we are getting to know new wives and catching up with familiar faces.

No matter where we are or what we are doing, God blesses our friendships. In addition to being seminary wives, we are also mothers, musicians, teachers, nurses, nannies, office assistants, and more. Despite the variety in our vocations, it's easy to find something in common with one another as we build friendships. I often hear and see wives going to each other for advice on ministry, work issues, and parenting. It's comforting to know that God has placed us alongside others that can provide encouragement during the difficult times and celebrate the good ones!

In addition to the “official” gatherings for seminary student wives, we also get together “unofficially.” If you have ever been to the seminary to attend a concert or graduation, I'm sure you have seen groups of seminary wives hanging out. Because I did not have close friends among the wives when my husband started at the seminary, such events used to be the only place I met with other wives. However, four years later, my “seminary wife friends” have now become my



“regular” friends! Our relationships have grown from small talk at seminary events, such as concerts, intramurals, or wife events, to frequenting restaurants, movies, and coffee shops. It's bittersweet knowing that these opportunities will not be so frequent after our husbands receive their calls in May.

You might not think of the student wives when thinking about the seminary, at least not at first. Now, I hope you remember the network of ladies behind the scenes that share friendship, wisdom, and compassion with one another. It truly impacts our husbands, their classes, and the seminary as a whole by strengthening the bonds of the campus family. Although we will eventually end up all over the world, those bonds will stand the test of time and distance. Ask your pastor's wife! As we near the end of our time at the seminary, pray that God blesses the growing friendships among seminary student wives until we move on to new locations to serve you while miles apart from each other! †

Elizabeth Borgwardt is the wife of Jacob Borgwardt, a 2025 seminary graduate.

Faithful Servants: Witnesses of Growth

In some ways, the seminary is ever growing and changing. To be sure, the Word of God never changes, and so the seminary's Scripture-centered mission won't either. In other ways, though, especially when viewed over decades, growth and change are hard to miss.

This past school year, we said farewell to two men who have witnessed the seminary growing and changing even as it remained rooted in the never-changing Word. Retiring after the first semester of the 2024–2025 academic year was Professor John Schuetze, who began teaching at the seminary in 1997. Professor Bill Tackmier, who began as seminary professor in 2010, retired at the conclusion of the academic year. Both men will remain busy, but they look forward to the more flexible schedules they'll be able to enjoy during retirement—John and Joan Schuetze in Tennessee, Bill and Dorcas Tackmier in Indiana.

As they each begin a new chapter in life, Κηρυξατε asked them about changes they witnessed during their time at the seminary.

One change that both men noticed during their time teaching was the role of technology. Prof. Tackmier recalled, "Shortly after I entered the ministry in 1990, my associate, Jon Balge, and I bought our first computers." Prof. Schuetze remembered when technology entered the seminary classroom: "When I started at the seminary, the main visual media was the overhead projector. When I retired, we were using smart boards. I can remember debating in a faculty meeting what place laptops should play in the classroom and it



Professor John Schuetze

was quite a change when we began requiring them. . . . When I started at the seminary no one had a smart phone and few had a cell phone. But the present generation of students can't remember life without laptops or smart phones."

Prof. Schuetze took special note of a positive development during his years of service. "The other big change is in the area of mental health. We are doing a much better job addressing those needs which have only increased over the years." Prof. Schuetze served as campus counselor for many years, assisting students personally or referring them to other counselors when they faced mental health challenges. (Prof. Joel Russow is now serving in this role.)

Have seminary students changed over the years? Yes and no. Prof. Schuetze observed, "Students have changed a lot over my nearly three decades of teaching. I had to keep reminding myself that the student I faced in the late 90s was much different than the

student I have in 2025. It's not that one was better than the other, they were just from a very different generation." On the other hand, in one respect students have remained the same despite the changing times. Prof. Tackmier noted, "The thing that has consistently struck me during my fifteen years here is how serious students take their education at the seminary." While every student is unique, and some seminary students are still not sure that the public ministry is what they want to do, all seminary students display a desire to learn.

When asked to recall their first days after arriving on campus as a professor, both remembered some trepidation. "Could I measure up?" said Prof. Tackmier. "A group of solid, long-time Old Testament professors (Westendorf, Brug, and Bivens) would soon retire. Would I be able to fill their shoes?" Prof. Schuetze recalled wondering how he would manage to master the subjects he would be teaching. Presently it is standard practice to give new professors a few months to audit classes. But things were different then. Prof. Schuetze recalled, "I was installed in January and by March I was in the classroom teaching." With the Lord's help, the new professors dove in and took up their teaching responsibilities, growing more comfortable and confident each semester.

What will they miss about the seminary? One thing is the beautiful setting. Prof. Schuetze shared a perspective on the seminary grounds that's perhaps one-of-a-kind. "I am probably unique in this area, but I spent over 50 years on the seminary campus—as a prof's kid, as a student,

as a governing board member, and then as a professor. I know the campus and the woods inside and out. I have seen many changes and improvements over those 50 years. This eighty-acre 'park' is a beautiful place to live." What will Prof. Tackmier miss most about living here? "The people! It's been a little taste of heaven living with people who all share the same faith and the same goal of sharing the gospel."

We asked if any favorite memories stood out in their minds. Coincidentally, each happily recalled a memory that involved students and food—though in different ways. Prof. Schuetze recalled chatting with a middler class one day about where to find the best pizza in the Milwaukee area. "A couple weeks later it was a beautiful spring day, and we decided to have class outside in the circle. The students surprised me with pizza. They apologized that it wasn't from my favorite restaurant. They tried, but it didn't open until 4 p.m. The fact that they even looked into it and bought pizza anyway was pretty amazing."

Prof. Tackmier's standout memory involved food, too—but not food to eat. It happened during the 2020–2021 school year, while the world was dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. "I was going between classes. The previous hour I had been teaching in the auditorium. (One class had to meet in there because of the need for social distancing.) A group of students had gathered out in front of the tower for a breath of fresh air between classes. They had a katana [a long, Japanese sword] and a watermelon. There was a popular fad at the time of splitting fruit in midair with katanas. They cajoled me into it: 'Come on, Professor. Split a



Professor Bill Tackmier

Another faithful servant announced his retirement during the 2024–25 academic year: Dennis Sprenger, who (as you can read later in this issue) has served the seminary for ten years, the last five of which as buildings and grounds director. Dennis will be remembered not only for his passionate work and leadership, but also for his Christian love and his concern for the spiritual lives of all those he led. All who have lived and worked at the seminary are grateful for his faithful service to the Lord and to them. May Jesus bless him in his retirement.

watermelon!' One student threw the watermelon up in the air while another one videoed me hacking the watermelon in two. We all had a huge laugh. It was a perfect lighthearted moment in the midst of the heaviness of Covid."

Finally, we asked if these seasoned servants of the Lord had any final words of advice to offer seminary students. Prof. Schuetze shared some advice, once given to him, which he has passed along to many seminarians. "It was the fall of 1977 (my junior year at WLS) and I was leaving to conduct liturgy for the first time. As I was leaving my father caught me and said, 'Remember this is a great privilege and a great responsibility.' That comment made a deep impression on me. It set the tone for my ministry." Prof. Tackmier offered an outlook for the future, with all the changes that will bring for each seminary student. "Be open to what God has in store for you. It's better than you could ever have imagined. Growing up on a farm in Wisconsin, I never imagined living in suburban Washington, DC—until I got called there for vicar year. Nor did I ever imagine living in California—till I got called there as a pastor. But in both cases, it was not the places so much as the people there that made those experiences great. Be open to where God calls you. He has some incredible surprises in store for you."

We thank the Schuetzes and Tackmiers for decades of faithful service to the Lord and to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. May the Lord give them joy and contentment in this new chapter of their lives. †

Jonathan Micheel teaches preaching and church history at the seminary.

Growing while Proclaiming the Gospel in Song

What are some expectations when a choir sings a piece for the first time? When a choir opens a piece for the first time and sight-reads, the singers struggle to sing the notes in front of them. However, with each practice, the choir's confidence grows. They become more comfortable with the notes, style, and genre. Their initial struggles are replaced with a profound sense of accomplishment. This journey from uncertainty to confidence, from struggle to triumph, is a significant part of how a choir grows.

There are many more types of growth that happen within a choir. When a group like the Seminary Chorus unites, we grow in our friendships. The Seminary Chorus grows through God's grace as he allows us to praise and proclaim his love to others. Growth occurs when we talk with our host families about Jesus and ministry. But what does that look like through the lens of a chorus member?

When I go on bus or car rides to a concert, I have the opportunity to socialize with my future colleagues and have meaningful conversations about God's Word. These trips are not just about transportation but amazing fellowship with my fellow choristers. We have conversations that sharpen our faith, remind us of Jesus' death and resurrection, and strengthen our bond as a choir. This fellowship is a significant part of our growth.



During a concert, I scan the congregation and see how the gospel touches people of all ages. When we sing, we are actually preaching the gospel in song. As I sing God's Word, God grows my faith and trust in his promises. The audience's receptiveness and engagement play a crucial role as I see the impact of God's

Word on their faith. When the congregation sings with the chorus, God reminds me of his promises through their singing, which strengthens my faith in God's plan for me.

After each concert on tour, I stay with a host family. The host family, often someone I have never met, plays a crucial role in my growth. As I relax after a concert at the hosts' house, I learn about their lives and how God has blessed them. Their faith, which God created in them, greatly influences me. They could be life-long Christians who could remind me of God's blessings. Or they could be

new to Christianity and could remind me of the joy of God's saving grace. Regardless, their presence and their stories contribute significantly to my growth. I am grateful for the host families' hospitality and the conversations about faith. These conversations help my faith grow. They also motivate me to make sure that, when I serve as a pastor, I proclaim and explain God's Word clearly, so that people like them can grow spiritually.

Singing in the Seminary Chorus not only grows our singing and playing abilities but also grows our faith through the ministry conversations with each other and our host families. As we travel and sing the gospel, we grow and remind each other of Christ's love. I thank God for allowing me to sing in the Seminary Chorus. The growth I experience in the chorus equips me to help others grow. †

Jordan Massiah is a 2025 graduate of the seminary. Jordan served as president of the Seminary Chorus during his senior year.

To learn more about the chorus or to find a concert near you, visit wisluthsem.org/about-wls/the-seminary-chorus/.



Overflowing Blessings

God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7) and richly blesses his children so that they may express their love and gratitude to Christ through financial gifts. Many of those gifts have long supported ministerial education at synodical schools like Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS).

Before 2005, the seminary president personally visited key donors to maintain relationships and encourage support. Many of these donors contributed regularly to student aid or special projects like the chapel renovation. But as educational costs rose and donations declined, the

As of June 1, Kevin Keller retires after twenty years faithfully serving Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary as director of mission advancement.

Wisconsin Evangelical Synod (WELS) recognized the need for a more structured approach. In response, a Mission Advancement department was formally established in 2005 following a resolution at the WELS synod convention.

With the synod subsidy to WLS drastically reduced, the seminary had to find new ways to raise awareness of WLS's mission and generate consistent support for students. Through consultation with experts in charitable fundraising and visits to other seminaries, WLS developed a comprehensive plan and selected Kevin Keller, chosen from a list of candidates, to lead the new department. Keller's deep understanding of WELS culture and his ability to communicate the seminary's story to WELS members made him an ideal fit.

This shift allowed the seminary president to focus on other responsibilities. One of the key themes in those early days of mission advancement was that it takes more than a seminary to make a pastor—it takes a strong synod, area Lutheran high schools and prep schools, a strong college, and gracious donors. WLS wasn't simply asking people to "shake out their pockets"; instead, they aimed to inform WELS members so members could understand the seminary's needs and direct their blessings to where they were most needed.

Mission Advancement's role goes beyond just raising funds—it has built strong relationships with the WELS Ministry of Christian Giving, which helps manage synod donor portfolios. Visits to donors are made to thank, update, and encourage them while always being mindful of their needs and intentions. Over time, Mission Advance-



Each October, Friends of the Seminary Day offers an annual opportunity to learn about and support the seminary's mission.

ment has also helped donors who desire to establish endowment funds, providing a steady stream of income for essential seminary needs, especially scholarships for students.

God has richly blessed the efforts of the Mission Advancement department and Kevin Keller over the past two decades. More than 60,000 gifts have been given by over 10,000 donor units, a testament to the Holy Spirit working in the hearts and lives of believers. Each gift reflects a donor's faith in Christ and desire to share the gospel with future generations. Thanks to this generosity, WLS has continued to train faithful men for the pastoral ministry.

Sean Young steps in as the new director of mission advancement after serving in WELS mission operations since May 2012.

Looking to the future, Mission Advancement is committed to continuing its work of supporting donors while further raising awareness of the seminary and its mission among WELS members. The vision for the future is clear: to continue nurturing relationships with donors while telling the story of WLS, helping them understand how their gifts make a lasting difference in the mission of the church. As the mission advancement team continues their work, they invite everyone to pray that God moves hearts to continue to support this vital work and serve their Savior in a meaningful, lasting way.

Because of God's greatest gift—Jesus Christ—we now give with joyful hearts to the work of the seminary, ensuring that more people may come to know the gospel message that has been entrusted to us. God be praised for the incredible support that has sustained Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary! †

Barbara Rickaby serves as communications coordinator for Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.



The annual Mission and Ministry seminar equips students with tools and zeal for sharing the gospel.



Excitement fills the campus after seminary seniors receive their assignments into pastoral ministry.



A warm, sunny day might find a class moving outside to the circle.



The Asian Ministry Conference meets on the seminary campus for learning and mutual encouragement.



In April, each seminary senior presents a summary of his senior thesis.



Students and faculty families work together to beautify the campus on Arbor Day.



Every student and faculty member takes a turn leading morning chapel each school year.



Each year Eta Beta Rho, a society encouraging scholarship in Hebrew, welcomes new inductees.



Students from many Lutheran elementary schools come for chapel and a tour of the seminary each fall.



Nine pastors completed the Master of Sacred Theology (STM) degree in 2025.



Morning chapel services are livestreamed each school day on the seminary website, www.wls.edu.



Generations of seminary students connect at the WLS Alumni Society's annual meeting.

Alive and Growing Professionally

When a product on the grocery store shelf grabs our attention by proclaiming that it now has “improved taste” we might walk away thinking, “Was it so bad that it needed to be improved?”

When we talk about professional growth in terms of the faculty at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) do our minds arrive at the same question? Do they need to grow? Is the teaching of such a quality that it needs to be improved?

On the one hand, the answer is “no.” The professors at the seminary have an impressive grasp of their respective content areas and have put in years of formal advanced study. They bring decades of experience from the parish ministry with them to the classroom. They possess a deep love for their Savior, for God’s Word, and for their students. Those things are foundational to the quality education that future pastors receive here. And they show in the classroom every single day.

At the same time, though, the members of the faculty understand that they have been entrusted with the special and significant responsibility of training future pastors. With gratitude for this and all God’s gifts, we joyfully commit ourselves to the faithful stewardship of the teaching ministry.

With those things in mind, the answer to the earlier question is also “yes.” The quality of teaching here at the seminary always needs to be improving. Our faculty genuinely cares about communicating our lessons in ways that will help students to retain and use what they have learned when they graduate from WLS and go out to the churches they will pastor.

Because I teach education here, the seminary has asked me to be an encourager and a resource for my faculty brothers when it comes to



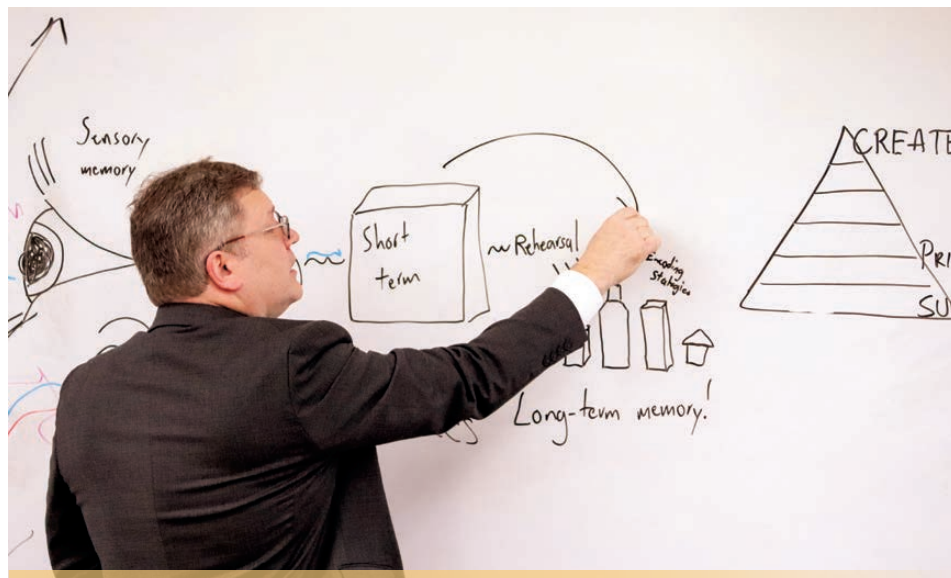
teaching. In a typical week that might mean helping a colleague properly set up his course gradebook electronically, leading a faculty-wide study on writing learning outcomes, or giving a fellow professor advice on how to better involve a quiet student in classroom conversation. Many faculty members invite me to visit their classrooms as part of our faculty’s yearly peer visitation program. As a means of regularly staying in touch, I send out a weekly email to our faculty that includes teaching tips and research summaries that can inform the methodological choices we make when teaching. To be able to share information that will enrich my colleagues, I, too, am required to be constantly reading and growing.

When you read more and more, you

are constantly brought to the realization of just how much you *don’t know*. And I am a pastor, by trade, so I’m pretty sure that I don’t know education like a teacher who has been trained as such and who has many years of experience in a classroom. I’m always a little amazed that my faculty brothers are willing to have me give them advice about their classroom methods.

But perhaps it’s not so surprising that these teachers are so teachable. In one way or another, in one subject area or another, they have been learning their whole lives. And that learning does not stop when one becomes a professor at WLS. The professional growth of our faculty is a multi-pronged work in progress. Each professor recognizes his need to grow in his primary teaching area, his secondary teaching area, and his overall knowledge of God’s Word and God’s church. What an incredible blessing it is that, in addition to all those other responsibilities, our faculty is firmly intent on growing in their teaching abilities, as well. Pray that God would continue to give that growth! †

Paul Waldschmidt serves as director of instruction and teaches education and Old Testament at the seminary.



The Growing Pastor

The Lord encourages his people to pray for the spiritual leaders he has provided for them. Pray for the pastor who serves you as a shepherd under Christ—for his spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being. Pray for his family and his ministry among you. Pray also for your pastor’s spiritual and professional growth.

Twenty-one large blocks of time—that is what the pastor gets if he divides every day of the week into a morning block, an afternoon block, and an evening block. If he reserves six of those blocks for his family, the remaining blocks will result in a work week of about 55–60 hours.



in an Old Testament introduction book called *Prepare the Way of the Lord*. For church history, he is reading a chapter a week from *The Lives and Writings of the Great Fathers of the Lutheran Church*. To review Christian doctrine, he is reading through about fifteen pages from their dogmatics

class notes, which serve as a textbook at the seminary. In the area of practical theology, the pastor chooses books on preaching, teaching, leadership, and counseling. Currently, he is reading a book called *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition*. The pastor reads for about thirty minutes from each book and takes a short break between them. Sometimes he listens to audiobooks or podcasts.

Pastors who plan and carry out weekly informal study time will reap a variety of benefits. They will discover and maintain the joy of learning, finding often that what they just studied can be shared with members and prospects during the week. They will grow in faith and knowledge, be more confident for ministry, and be motivated and better

equipped to participate in formal continuing education courses with other pastors. Every pastor is knit together differently. This disciplined approach to informal continuing education will not necessarily work for all pastors. Planning for this kind of growth, however, is the best way to make sure it happens. Grow in Grace, the branch of the seminary dedicated to the continued growth of pastors, encourages pastors to make time in their weekly schedule for this kind of study, and we provide resources and recommendations for such study.

We pray that the Lord will continue to bless our growing pastors. †

Bradley Wordell is director of Grow in Grace and professor of Old Testament.
2025 *Alive and Growing* 15



We encourage that pastors dedicate one ministry block to informal study every week. The church secretary should know that he is “scheduled” (unless it is an emergency). As he unplugs from ministry and technology, the pastor can dive into his studies. Consider the following hypothetical study session.

Beginning at 1:00 p.m. the pastor reads periodicals and newsletter articles: an article and a book review from *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, our seminary’s theological journal; some articles from *Forward in Christ* magazine; articles from the *Grow in Grace Notes* newsletter and *The Four Branches* newsletter; a book review and perhaps a podcast from *The Shepherd’s Study*; and an article from the seminary’s library resources (e.g., from the ATLA database or the essay file). There are many other resources distributed

Blessed to Be Stewards of the Seminary Grounds

If you had walked around the eighty-acre plot of farmland on which Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) found its new home in Mequon, Wisconsin, back in 1928, you would have seen a plot that is open and bare. The rich soil, cleared for farming, would have been waiting for seeds to be sown and for growth to begin. The land itself, a blank canvas, was ripe with potential—not just for physical cultivation, but for the growth of a seminary dedicated to training future pastors. Today, as you walk that same land, you will find it transformed into a vibrant and flourishing campus. This transformation is not just the result of time, but of intentional care, thoughtful planning, and the hard work of the maintenance and grounds crews who ensure that the seminary’s mission is reflected in its physical environment.

The grounds at WLS are alive in the most tangible sense. Trees that were once saplings now tower above the campus, their branches providing shade and beauty. Flowerbeds bloom

with color throughout the seasons, and beautiful mowed lines in the lawns create a sense of peace and order. This physical vitality is the product of countless hours of work by the grounds crew, a team whose dedication goes beyond mowing grass and planting flowers.

MEET THE CREW

WLS is blessed to have great leaders on staff to ensure that this campus maintains its beauty and professional look to it. Building and Grounds Director Dennis Sprenger has faithfully served this campus since October of 2015. Dennis brings countless years of experience with a background in being an automotive technician, EMS Captain for the Richfield Fire Department, and a landscape manager. These diverse skills pay dividends. With this experience he brings great leadership. A mentor of Dennis reminded him when he started the job that “good leadership starts with love.” A good leader has a few different slogans in his back pocket, and Dennis is no

stranger to that. On a weekly basis he reminds us: “Make sure the campus looks nice in case that family from Minnesota drives through.”

Campus Grounds Supervisor Joel Zak has been faithfully serving this campus since the last week of 2019. Joel has a biology degree from UW Stevens Point and a masters in forest ecology from Alabama A&M University. Joel has also done field work in Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Alabama, and Florida before starting a family and a career in landscaping. Joel does a good job of not just teaching the “how” but also the “why” behind the grounds crew’s work. It was Dennis who reached out to Joel and connected him to WLS. (Joel and Dennis served together at Morning Star Lutheran Church in Jackson, Wisconsin.) Together, their combined expertise ensures that the seminary grounds continue to thrive and reflect the beauty of God’s creation.

The interesting thing about the men who serve on the grounds crew is that they are all students at WLS. For the 2024–2025 school year the crew consisted of two middlers (Adam Arrowsmith and Seth Hackbarth) and two juniors (Owen Eubank and Aidan Lewis). The relationships between Dennis, Joel, and the students go beyond work. Dennis and Joel are more than supervisors; they are mentors who take the time to teach, encourage, and lead in a Christ-like way.

THE GROUNDS ARE ALIVE AND GROWING

There’s a bit of irony in this year’s theme—“Alive and Growing”—because much of the work done by the grounds crew involves dealing with things that are dead. The towering trees that give the campus its beauty

also shed countless sticks and millions of leaves, littering the ground each year. Every fall, leaves blanket the campus, requiring the crew to haul truckloads to the compost pile. In winter, the focus shifts to removing dead trees and broken branches. However, in this process, there is renewal. Rather than simply discarding these remnants, the crew feeds them into a woodchipper, transforming them into mulch that can be used around campus. Winter brings another responsibility: snow removal. With Wisconsin’s harsh winters, the grounds crew is up before dawn, shoveling sidewalks, plowing roads and parking lots, and salting pathways to ensure that students and professors can safely get to school.

Joel Zak provides attention to detail when it comes to the campus’s plants and trees, ensuring that they remain healthy and vibrant. An example of this, which he has taught the crew, is the rejuvenation process. Mature shrub plantings on campus can be “reset” during the dormant season. Rather than removing and replacing them entirely the crew prunes the stems back to the ground level (usually 6–12 inches above the ground). By clearing out the deadwood and allowing the root system to regenerate which allows for the shrub to come back to life in the spring with a more compact and healthier look. “It is interesting to observe this renewal process in one of God’s creations that we often take for granted,” says Zak.

LESSONS LEARNED

The grounds crew’s work is more than just maintaining a beautiful landscape. Its work also provides valuable life lessons that align with the very purpose of WLS. The daily work of the grounds crew teaches essential



skills and attitudes that will serve its members well in their future ministries. Taking care of the grounds requires patience, foresight, adaptability, and teamwork. The crew learns the importance of diligent preparation, whether it’s anticipating seasonal changes in the landscape or preparing for events on campus. If you were to look at the last two objectives of WLS you would see:

- ♦ to train theological students and pastors in the skills required for ministry in an ever-changing world;
- ♦ to instill in theological students and pastors the kinds of attitudes that will assist them as they carry out their ministry in the contemporary world.

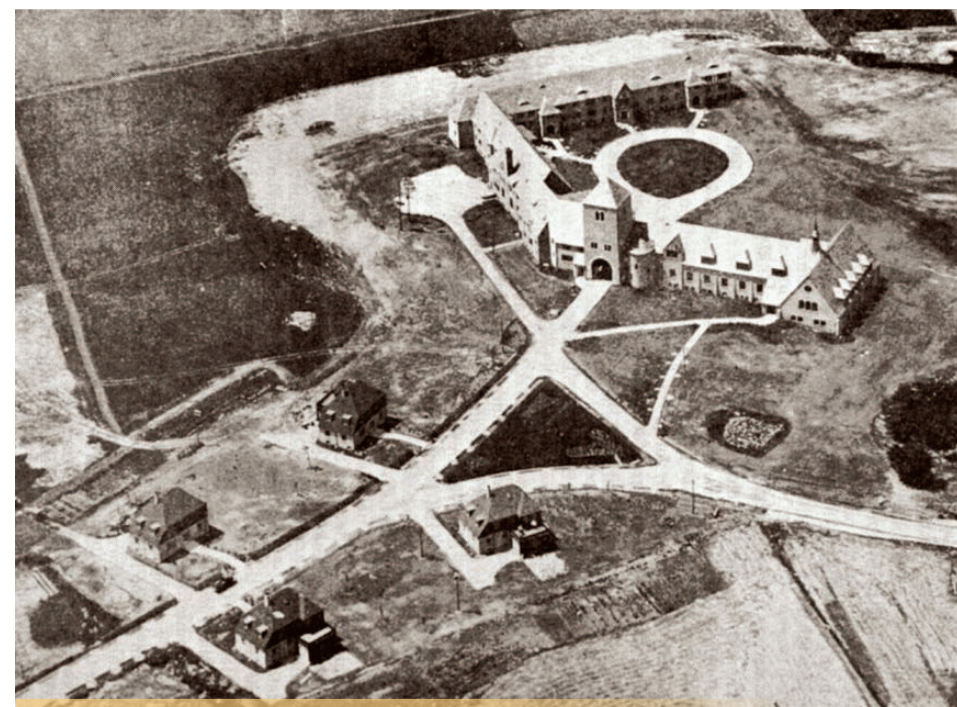
The work of the seminary’s grounds crew directly reflects these objectives.

ALIVE AND GROWING

The transformation of WLS’s campus from a barren plot of farmland to a thriving, vibrant campus is a testament

to God’s blessings and the faithful stewardship of those who care for it. The grounds crew, through their daily work, not only nurtures the beauty of the seminary but also grows in skills and attitudes that will serve them well in their future ministries. The students and staff who dedicate themselves to this work understand that they are not merely maintaining a campus but being stewards of a gift from God. Written in the shop is a Bible passage, Colossians 3:23 (NIV), “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.” This is a good reminder for the grounds crew every day. These men are not just working for the soil on which they stand, nor are they working for their own sinful pride but rather working for the Lord. The campus of WLS is truly alive and growing, and through God’s grace, so are the students who walk its paths. We are blessed to be stewards of the seminary grounds. †

Adam Arrowsmith is serving as a vicar during the 2025–2026 school year.



Growing in Our Desire to Be Good Stewards of Our Bodies

"I believe that God created me and all that exists, and that he gave me my body and soul..."

Seminary students and professors will immediately recognize the opening words of Luther's explanation of the first article of the Apostles' Creed, words that highlight the importance of spiritual and physical health. The school's rigorous theological curriculum is designed to cultivate the former, but what about the latter? What does Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary do to encourage faithful stewardship of the bodies God has given us?

In addition to having a gymnasium and well-appointed fitness center for individual and group exercise, the Special Events Committee invites a fitness consultant onto campus in the opening weeks of the fall semester every school year. A 1986 graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, Dwight Sandvold holds degrees in education and athletic training, and he has worked in the sports performance and general health and wellness fields for four decades. After giving a morning presentation to the entire student body, he spends the rest of the day meeting with students, professors, and staff members who sign up for one-on-one consultations.

As a former teacher, Dwight understands the unique challenges that confront future and current called workers. "Being a student or pastor is an honorable but largely sedentary task. After-school activities and meetings often leave little time to exercise and prepare whole foods for meals, and fast food or processed foods end up being a quick fix."

Dwight is grateful for the opportunity to address all the students, but he especially looks forward to his sessions



Each April, all ages take part in the Seminary Scurry, a fun run/walk through and around the seminary campus.

with individuals. "Each consultation allows me to assist people who want to create a plan for improved health. The students and professors often open up to me about their struggles with time management, stress, and trying to juggle all the balls. We are able to help them create a plan to move the fitness needle in the right direction. This process is truly rewarding for me."

Dwight's visits to the seminary campus are also a blessing for those who meet with him, whether they are already physically active or just looking for some ideas to get started. "I had a consistent workout routine when I talked to Dwight," said seminary student Malachi Mortensen, "so I was interested in learning more about new workouts to diversify my options. He showed me some different upper and lower body workouts that I could add to my routine, and he also explained the benefits of incorporating some cardio exercises as well. The more I've done them, the more I've learned to enjoy them!"

Married student Jacob Borgwardt also expressed appreciation for Dwight's expertise. "My wife and I had always

heard that lap swimming is a great way to exercise without overstressing your joints, but we had never officially learned to swim. Dwight was the perfect person to ask for help. In twenty minutes, he gave us a crash course in freestyle that we have been able to use at the community pool in the mornings before we go off to work or school."

Professor Brad Wordell signed up for a personal consultation with Dwight last year, in part because he recognized that establishing a consistent exercise routine has spiritual implications. "Physical fitness is a stewardship issue. I want to take care of the body that the Lord has given me. This in turn will help me serve in my callings as husband, father, grandfather, professor, colleague, and church member."

We give thanks for Dwight's partnership with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, and we thank the Lord for working through our physical exercise to strengthen us so that we can carry out the important spiritual work he has given us to do. †

Steven Pagels teaches systematic theology and preaching at the seminary.

Cultivating Cross-Cultural Pastoral Formation

I am a 71-year-old male of northwestern and eastern European ancestry. Being born and raised in northcentral Wisconsin, it's not surprising that I still enjoy deer hunting. My hunting partner, who lives in a city about twenty minutes away from my village, is thirty-one years old. He is a member of the Hmong community. We first met in August 2020. How did two guys with obvious differences in age and ethnicity, who reside in different locations, ever get connected?

The answer: through the Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS). The WLS website states: *In partnership with WELS Joint Missions, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's Pastoral Studies Institute provides pre-seminary and seminary training to North American students from a variety of countries and cultures . . . In addition, around the world . . . PSI stands ready to assist regional mission teams in the evaluation process and to provide consultation and support in theological education leading to fellowship.*

As a retired WELS pastor and missionary, I am one of the many adjunct instructors who assist the WLS faculty in training PSI students. Most of the time, but not always, this has involved distance learning with courses being taught via the Internet. I've had the privilege of instructing Asian students from Iowa and Wisconsin, an African from Minnesota, and men from the Philippines and Kenya. My hunting partner, Semson Lor, is one of those students.

PSI students are often older than other WLS students



and come from different ethnic backgrounds. As such they will bring experiential knowledge to their future ministries in addition to the theological education provided by PSI. As future pastors called to serve within a specific ethnic group, they possess societal and cultural insights that books do not teach. Their uniqueness can only make our cadre of clergy stronger.

As of last fall Semson is also, professionally speaking, my colleague in Christ in that he now serves with a divine call as vicar at First German and Trinity Hmong in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. But of far greater importance is the simple fact that we are baptized brothers in Christ. This is the foundation of our relationship whether we are discussing theology as retired pastor and vicar, studying a PSI course as theological instructor and student, or just as two guys who simply enjoy being out in God's creation while hunting in the great outdoors.

My battery-operated socks keep my old feet warm when in the woods during winter in Wisconsin. But the blessing of being a PSI instructor for Semson and other men like him warms my heart as they share their faith and spiritual insights with me. The fellowship we share is special. The hunting is fun, but it is our shared faith that really binds us together.

At the end of one of his exams then-vicar Lor wrote in answer to the final question: *I know that this is just the start. I hope and pray that I grow in knowledge and faith so that I can rightly interpret God's Word in the only right way and be able to use that knowledge to share the good news of Jesus with the world.* May our dear Lord Jesus continue to foster this humble servant attitude in the hearts of all our PSI and seminary students as they continue in their current studies and later in their future ministries. *Soli Deo Gloria!* †

Gregory Bey is a retired pastor and missionary currently serving as an instructor for the Pastoral Studies Institute.

Growing through 25 Years of the Symposium

While the seminary's primary objective throughout its long history has been to train men to serve as parish pastors, there has always been an effort to continue that training after graduation. Compared to the continuing education program the seminary carries out today, early efforts were meager, but the school's heart was in the right place.

One of the early efforts was the seminary's Pastors Institute. Introduced in the 1950s, the event invited pastors to the campus on five Monday afternoons in the fall to hear two sets of essays, each set delivered by a faculty member. Attendance hovered between thirty and fifty, and most attendees came from congregations inside an arc from Madison to Manitowoc. Faulty wives served coffee and snacks during a half-hour fellowship break.

The benefit for pastors attending the Pastors Institute was no doubt positive, but the work to research and write five essays within a span of five weeks was a heavy load for the two presenters. Some of the newer faculty members wondered whether there was a better way to do this event.

In September 1997, I attended Concordia Seminary's Theological Symposium. Several hundred pastors of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod gathered at the two-day event for essays and workshops presented by speakers from around the synod. Attendees earned no academic credits but seemed to enjoy new insights, shared experiences, and fellowship with brothers, the latter encouraged by food and beverages served in their famous seminary Quadrangle. By the time I returned to our seminary, I was convinced—this is the better way to do Pastors Institute!

I shared my ideas with new seminary president David Valleskey, who was very willing to move forward with the idea. The basic structure was this:

- ◆ The seminary would host its Fall Symposium on a Monday and Tuesday in September.
- ◆ Students would be required to attend as part of their training.
- ◆ Pastors and retired pastors from WELS and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod would be invited.
- ◆ The symposium would have an overarching topic.
- ◆ Three essays would be presented under the chosen topic.
- ◆ Essayists would be parish pastors and professors from Martin Luther College (MLC) and Wisconsin Lutheran College.

- ◆ A faculty member would serve as an advisor for each essayist and present a formal reaction.
- ◆ A fellowship event with food and beverages would be held on Monday evening.
- ◆ A service with Holy Communion would be scheduled for Tuesday morning.

The plan was presented to the faculty's Continuing Education Committee in the spring of 1998 and then to the faculty and staff. Not all were convinced at first. We decided on a "trial" event as part of the celebration of WELS 150th anniversary in 2000. The theme was "Forward in Christ at the Dawn of a New Millennium." Essayists were Pastor Joel Prange, Pastor Keith Wessel, and MLC Professor Paul Wendland. President Valleskey preached at the service with music provided by the Seminary Chorus. A local catering firm supplied food and refreshments.

Over 400 attended that first event. Pastors from near and far participated, some to fellowship with classmates and some to enjoy the company of their sons. The speakers presented works of high academic quality, and reactors summarized main points. Questions from the floor were insightful. The camaraderie went long into the night. Many remarked that worship around Word and sacrament with brothers and soon-to-be brothers in ministry was the high point of the symposium.

The structure and objectives of the initial "trial" symposium have remained in place for twenty-five years. The chosen topics reflect trending issues in WELS and the world. The invited speakers approach their work seriously and display both their seminary education and their personal continuing education. Students and pastors continue to enjoy the academic challenges of the essays, the brotherly fellowship of the afterglow, and faith-strengthening worship. How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity (Psalm 133:1). †

James Tiefel directed the Seminary Chorus and taught worship, preaching, and education until his retirement in 2020.



Growing Together, One Book at a Time

For as long as I've wanted to be a pastor, I've wanted to be a "pastor who reads books." I remember walking into my pastor's office as a child and being blown away by floor-to-ceiling shelves packed with knowledge and ideas. In an instant, *that* was the ideal. There's a difference between collecting books and reading them. I became a

advice? More commitment. More pages. He suggested I create the book club I *really* wanted to be in, and the right people would come and stay. He had gone through a similar situation when pastoring a campus ministry in Canada, and had decided that from then on, his group would read only the greatest books ever written.



collector . . . for years, I would stash volumes away like a squirrel prepping for a literary winter. I always *wanted* to read, but despite a whole childhood of library trips and summer reading clubs, I didn't *really* love reading until about halfway through college.

I decided I would read every single day, whether for a full hour or a half-page. A modest Goodreads reading goal and 15–30 minutes a day stacked up across the weeks and months, and soon I had a full-blown hobby that I was ready to share with friends! I started a few book clubs during that year. The commitment was minimal. We read 150-page Christian nonfiction books that were nice, but didn't offer much in the way of depth or fodder for discussion. These clubs disintegrated, often before the final pages could even be turned.

While at Martin Luther College (MLC), I was taking Introduction to Philosophy with Prof. Luke Thompson, a fellow bookworm who I thought might sympathize with my plight. When I shared my book club woes with him, he smiled knowingly. His

That was the moment the Great Books Club was born.

"Great Books' are considered the greatest books of all time because they contribute in major ways to the great ideas that have shaped our world," Luke Thompson says. "When you read and discuss a Great Book with friends, a bit of that greatness rubs off onto you. Exposure to great writing will help you become a great writer. Exposure to great ideas helps you think greatly."

We read Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* first, meeting once a month in Professor Thompson's living room. As my graduation from MLC approached that spring, Prof. Thompson and I decided the club would continue at MLC and a new chapter would begin at the seminary. After all, who could benefit from reading Great Books more than men who hope to make a career of reading and writing beautiful things?

At the beginning of each semester, seminarians, their wives, faculty, and staff receive an email with a flowery

title like "The Literary Adventure of a Lifetime." Inside is a map for the quest to which they're being invited—an opportunity to immerse or escape, depending on how an interested traveler looks at it.

So far, we've chased Jean Valjean through nineteenth-century France and mingled with Russian aristocrats during war and peacetime alike. We narrowly escaped a barrow-wight with an unlikely band of hobbit heroes and watched with stunned awe as Eve plucked the fruit from the tree and Paradise was lost. At the time of this writing, we've only just made it out of Inferno alongside Dante and Virgil! Plenty of adventure awaits.

But while the Great Books Club is certainly fun, I'd be remiss to leave you with the impression that pleasure is the club's only aim. There are moments when a bit of epic poetry or a classic work translated from Russian is the last thing we want to read after a busy day of translating, memorizing, or writing papers. But Paul calls us to meditate on the true, the good, and the beautiful when he says, "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (Philippians 4:8 NIV). Reading and discussing the Great Books is one way to do that.

Reading Great Books and discussing them with friends is a deeply enriching experience. But the best part of all? All the time spent surrounded by beautiful words and perspective-altering stories conditions us to be all the more ready to immerse ourselves in the greatest story ever told—the story of a God who made a wayward people his own. †

Cameron Schroeder is serving as a vicar during the 2025–2026 school year.

Expanding Facilities to Meet New Challenges

Throughout its 175 years of existence, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) has always made the training of pastors a high priority. In 1863, the Wisconsin Synod opened its seminary in a rented home in Watertown, Wisconsin, with one professor and one student. Ever since then, the synod has shown the willingness to adapt, change, and expand its facilities to meet new challenges.



Artist's rendering of proposed fellowship addition to the auditorium

In the early 1890s, with growing enrollment, the synod constructed a new building in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. By early 1920, the Wauwatosa building was outdated, and the enrollment had outgrown the building. An eighty-acre farm in Mequon, Wisconsin, was deemed perfectly suitable for a new seminary which was dedicated in 1929, only two months before the stock market crashed.

Various challenges over the decades brought additions to the 1929 structure. At the seminary's centennial celebration in 1963, a dormitory addition was dedicated in anticipation of growing enrollments. Over the next decade, the enrollment more than doubled. The increasing number of students necessitated additional classroom space. The library on the upper floor was too small for the growing collection of books. A new library addition was completed in 1968, and the old library space was remodeled into two classrooms. The dining hall space became insufficient when the enrollment approached 150 on-campus students. A new dining hall was added in 1970.

The most recent addition to the seminary campus came in 1986 when the auditorium-gymnasium was completed. Prior to 1986, there was no space for large gatherings. Graduation was held outdoors in the inner circle, weather permitting, and few people were able to attend the assignment day service held in the chapel. The only indoor space for athletic activities was a small gymnasium below the chapel. This new building provided much improved athletic facilities for the students. More importantly, it provided the needed space for large gatherings such as graduation, assignment

day services, and the Christmas concert.

Recent years have seen new challenges arise. The value of collaborative learning means that classrooms with desks that face forward are giving way to pods of tables. This requires larger spaces. Unfortunately, the current classrooms that allow for such arrangements are in the lower level where there is little to no natural light. The trend in the last few years of classes with enrollments nearing or surpassing forty students means that the classrooms with the best natural light are too small to accommodate the larger class sizes.

The last couple of decades has seen an increased desire for fellowship outside of the classroom. Students and their wives enjoy getting together—and even invite the professors! While the dorm basement has served the purpose for such fellowship gatherings for many decades, it easily gets crowded and noisy. A space for other fellowship gatherings with guests to the seminary is also desirable.



Artist's rendering of proposed new classroom building

With the seminary's history of expanding facilities to meet new challenges, it is only natural for the seminary to consider a building expansion to meet today's challenges. The proposed building project will include six new classrooms with space for flexible seating arrangements, appropriate technology, and ample natural light. A new fellowship addition will allow sufficient space for events that bring people together. The current classrooms will be remodeled to provide offices for every professor and make them more available to students and to each other.

The Lord has blessed the seminary throughout its history with leaders who had the foresight and wisdom to invest resources into the seminary's facilities. May he continue to shower his gracious blessings so that the seminary has the necessary facilities to carry out its mission of preparing pastors to shepherd God's people with the gospel. †

Joel Otto is dean of students and professor of church history and education at the seminary.

Growing while Teaching High School Students

I consider myself very blessed! I have the wonderful privilege of learning in two different classroom settings. From 7:30 a.m. till 12:30 p.m., I sit in a classroom at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary as a student. From 1:15 p.m. till 3:00 p.m. I stand in front of a classroom at Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School (KMLHS) as a teacher. I have witnessed incredible growth both in myself and in my students. I have grown in my skills as a teacher and future pastor, and my students have grown in their desire to learn more about God's Word.

I never thought I would teach in a high school setting. Before teaching at KMLHS, I didn't have much experience doing ministry with teens. However, when the opportunity was offered to me, I thought I would give it a shot and see how God would help me grow through it. I am very grateful that I took that opportunity! I have grown in my confidence in teaching God's Word and in my love for the God-fearing teens I get to teach.

The seminary schedule is busy already. This teaching role certainly made my

schedule even busier. This was a good thing! I had to figure out how to balance doing my seminary homework, teaching fifty students, correcting their homework, and preparing lessons at the same time. This helped me grow in my time-management skills. I had to learn how to be more efficient at getting things done while not sacrificing priorities.

Thankfully, my vicar year was instrumental in helping me do so. My supervising pastor, Pastor Stephen Helwig (Gethsemane, Omaha, Nebraska), got me in the habit of planning my week out ahead of time via a block plan. This helped me delegate tasks to certain periods of time throughout an entire week. This routine during my vicar year has been very helpful for me during my senior year at the seminary. This has been the busiest school year for me by far, and yet it has also been my most productive school year by far. All these tasks and priorities have forced me to make sure all my available time is used efficiently and wisely while also still making time for necessary breaks and rest.

I also have grown in confidence as a teacher. The first couple weeks of class at KMLHS were intimidating. I had never taught a high school class before. Yet there I was, standing in front of a bunch of sophomores I had never met. Eventually, I got used to teaching them and grew to love it! It brought me much joy to teach these students more about God's Word. It especially brought me joy when my students got to ask me deeper questions about faith and God's Word.

On Fridays, I gave the students the opportunity to ask me anything they wanted about the Bible and our faith. They frequently asked me all sorts of deep and thoughtful questions about the Bible, ministry, faith, and doctrine. Their questions showed that they were interested in taking a deeper dive into Scripture. It was a joy to see the students grow in their desire to learn more than just the familiar stories of the Bible. I'm thankful that God blessed me with the opportunity to get to see that growth. †

Malachi Mortenson, a 2025 seminary graduate, taught part time at KMLHS during the 2024–2025 school year.





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