

# Keep up with seminarians from LSTC's new home page

If you haven't visited the student bloggers on "The Seminarian's Sojourn" at <http://www.seminarians-sojourn.blogspot.com/>, you are invited to hear from seminarians themselves about their journeys to ordained ministry and other forms of service. During January term, other students joined LSTC's "regular" bloggers, Ben Sheets, Lisa Parker, Wendy DeBoer, Becky Sorensen and Josh Ebener, to share their travel study experiences via blogs.

Joy Proper and Adrienne Coulter wrote about their experiences in Nebraska in "Adventures in Rural Immersion" [www.rural-immersion.blogspot.com/](http://www.rural-immersion.blogspot.com/). They sang the praises of their hosts' home cooking and learned liturgical settings new to them from the "old" red hymnal.

Justin Eller and Amanda Truchinski traveled to Washington state to connect creativity and faith at the Grunewald Center. They shared their experiences creating art in several media and living in a community of Christian artists on <http://www.grunewaldvisitors.blogspot.com/>

Karen Landahl joined the Lutheran World Relief blog for the Women-to-Women tour to Tanzania.

LSTC bloggers Becky Sorensen and Josh Ebener kept us up-to-date from Geneva, Switzerland and Nicaragua via the "Seminarian's Sojourn."

You can find links to all of these blogs and more at [www.lstc.edu](http://www.lstc.edu). You'll notice a newly-designed home page which makes navigation of the site much easier.



## You know someone who should think about going to seminary...

Tell them about LSTC's Seminary Sampler Weekends

October 27-29, 2007  
March 1-3, 2008

They will

- see the seminary,
- meet others discerning their call
- talk with students
- meet with faculty
- attend classes
- explore Hyde Park and parts of Chicago

Visitors are always welcome at LSTC, but Seminary Sampler Weekends allow bold and shy alike to be with others who are asking what God is calling them to do and to get a taste of seminary life.

For more information or to reserve a spot, call Becky Sorensen at 800-635-1116 ext. 726 or visit [www.lstc.edu/admissions](http://www.lstc.edu/admissions)

## Erratum and additional information

In the fall 2006 *Epistle* article, "Who Pays for Seminary Education?" the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Strandjord's quote in the section "Potential in congregations" on page 17 should read: "In 2004-05, the eight seminaries had a combined operating deficit of \$4.4million," he said. "In 2005, aggregate income of ELCA congregations increased to almost \$2.7 billion. If congregations were to invest just .2% more of their income in educating the next generation of pastors and lay rostered leaders, the seminaries could eliminate their operating deficits."

In the fall 2006 *Epistle*, on page 25, the photo of the Augustana Class of 1946 ran without a caption. The people in the photo are from left to right, the bottom row: Luverne Tengbom, Bernhard Erling, Earl Bengtson, Andrew Hanson, Ruben Pedersen, Wayne Peterson, Francis Johnson, Theodore Peterson. The upper row, left to right: Shirley Holmer, Marilyn Erling, Deloris Bengtson, Helen Hanson, Helen Pedersen, Jean Peterson, Marian Johnson, Claudia Peterson.



# Supporting your seminary

by Jan Boden

If you've ever attended LSTC's annual "Bach for the Sem" concert at St. Luke Church on Chicago's north side, you've heard Pastor David Abrahamson's welcome and exhortation to the audience. After warmly greeting the concert-goers, he reminds them how important it is for them to support "their" seminary, the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

"It's not a perfect place," Abrahamson says, much to the chagrin of LSTC staff members who promote the positive aspects of the school. "You may not agree with everything that they do, but it's OUR seminary and we need to support it with our prayers and our money."

Abrahamson's straightforward appeal says in a few words what most members of the ELCA may not know: the eight seminaries of the ELCA belong to the church. In addition to providing financial support, the Churchwide offices and each synod provide leadership for the seminaries. Each seminary board is composed of representatives elected or appointed by their supporting synods and by the Vocation and Education unit of the ELCA.

While the financial support from Churchwide and synods remains a significant portion of the seminaries' annual income, that support has leveled off over the last several years at the same time that the cost of educating students continues to increase. Each seminary is facing the challenge of bringing the message of its mission more directly to congregations and individuals to develop a sense of ownership for the seminaries and a desire to support them in the work they do on behalf of the church: preparing women and men for ministry.

## Importance of the annual fund

Tuition covers only one third of the cost of seminary education. Imagine attempting to prepare leaders for the church with only one third of the faculty, one third of the classroom space, one third of the available housing, with the lights and heat on only one third of the time. The ELCA would have far fewer leaders for the church.

"It isn't possible for seminaries to balance their budgets through tuition income," said Jonathan Strandjord, director for theological education for the ELCA. "It would run counter to the mission of the seminaries. If they charged enough to cover their

expenses, a number of people who are called to ministry would not be able to afford the cost of seminary education."

Because of the nature of their mission, seminaries may not apply for government and many private sources of funding available to colleges and universities. This increases the cost/tuition gap and presents a different sort of challenge to seminary fundraisers for making up the difference through gifts to the school.

Gifts to the annual fund are unrestricted and are to be spent in the current academic year for immediate needs including staff and faculty salaries, utility bills, office supplies, and the other day-to-day expenses of running a school. LSTC's annual fund also provides support to its extension program, the Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest, shared with Wartburg Theological Seminary.

## Supporting the next generation of pastors

"Every degree program, office, and activity at LSTC benefits from gifts to the annual fund," said Michael Klinefelter, assistant vice president for advancement. "Contributing to the annual fund is a very real way of being part of preparing the future leaders of the church."

The influence of pastors is exponential and immeasurable as they touch the lives of those to whom and with whom they minister. When people contribute to the work of the seminary, they are contributing to one of the core ministries of the church.

"The future of the church depends, in large part, upon the quality of its leadership. A gift to the seminary is a gift to the future of the church," said Mark Van Scharrel, vice president for advancement.

## Creating ownership

LSTC's advancement staff has been very successful in creating a sense of ownership and partnership with individuals and congregations who understand that they benefit directly from the work of the seminary. However, there are still literally thousands of congregations and tens of thousands of individuals in LSTC's supporting synods of Regions 4 and 5 who haven't made that connection.

"Our challenge is to get people thinking about their seminary—the excellent faculty, the students, its mission, even the buildings—the way they think

about their pastor and their church,” said Van Scharrel. “It is their seminary.”

### **Why alumni support is essential**

Alumni support is essential to LSTC—in the obvious ways of sharing their financial gifts, identifying new leaders, and guiding seminary students through field work, internship, and candidacy committees—and the not-so-obvious gift of influence.

“As grads in the field, we may not always be aware of the power we have to contribute to the future of theological education,” said Kim Beckmann, (1984, M.Div.; 1999, D.Min.), director of candidacy for the ELCA. “By simply lifting up the mission of seminaries in the communities we serve, we spread the word about the ways we form and prepare leaders for the church and the world. We spread the word to people who just may not know the roles they themselves can play in touching the future through their gifts and offerings.”

Beckmann has supported LSTC in several ways since her graduation. She served on LSTC’s alumni board and she and her husband, the Rev. Fred Kinsey (M.Div.), consistently contribute to the annual fund.

“As alums, we can walk off the stage at graduation with a little wave and a ‘good luck’ to those who follow in our footsteps. Or we can exercise our considerable influence and lend our support to their journey. I’ve been able to do that through my work on the alumni board, but the fact is that every alum donor has the opportunity to participate in the up-coming of some truly gifted leaders and be, in this way, mentors for the new generation,” said Beckmann.

### **Why donors support the annual fund**

Joan Baker and her late husband, Dick, have generously supported LSTC for decades through their contributions to the annual fund.

“We were blessed to have a pastor who was well-prepared as a leader, not only of our local congregation, but for leadership in the church at large,” said Mrs. Baker. “He also related to us how important stewardship is to faith life.

“As Dick and I became more involved in the church we saw how important it was for men and women to be prepared for ministry in a meaningful way. We knew how important it is to have the day-in and day-out resources to run the seminary, so we

decided to contribute to the annual fund.”

As a member of the board of trustees, which oversees the management of LSTC’s investments, Baker is aware of the financial challenges the seminary faces. “It’s so important to give to the annual fund because the church at large does not support seminaries as they used to,” she said. “If you want to have a top quality seminary, you have to pay the bills.”

Baker is excited about telling others about the mission of the seminary. “Most people in the pew have no idea how the church goes about preparing people for ministry,” she explained. “I get to tell them about the whole system of theological education in the ELCA and they learn how we go about preparing its pastors.”

### **Good stewards**

According to the Association of Theological Schools in the U.S. and Canada, the accrediting agency for seminaries, ELCA seminaries operate very efficiently. Compared to the seminaries of other denominations, ELCA seminaries accomplish the same task using far fewer funds—up to 40% less. This is due, in part, to the choice faculty make to teach here rather than at a divinity school or university which would pay far more than ELCA seminaries can pay. They choose to teach in a place that prepares leaders for the church—both as pastors and as teaching theologians around the world. In this way, faculty help shape the future of the Lutheran Church throughout the world.

“The seminaries need to respond to the educational needs of all the church’s leadership—from those training to be pastors and teachers to those who seek continuing education to lay people who want to learn more about a particular area of their faith,” said Van Scharrel. “LSTC is committed to being alert to those needs and responding to them. A strong annual fund means we will have the resources to do so.”

### **How to give**

Giving to the annual fund is as simple as writing a check to LSTC and mailing it. Every *Epistle* includes a gift envelope.

If you prefer to give online, go to [www.lstc.edu](http://www.lstc.edu) and click on the homepage link “Make a Gift to LSTC.”