Making the gospel real in Flint
Dear friends in Christ:

As the Reformation quincentenary drew near this fall, our chapel calendar grew crowded. We marked the occasion ecumenically with preachers from several denominations, because our evangelical gift is not high walls but open doors. Every week we were blessed with words from UCC, Mennonite, Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopal, and Baptist leaders, culminating on Reformation Day with a homily from the president of Catholic Theological Union, one of our Hyde Park partners. Sharing scripture and song, proclamation and prayer with our Roman Catholic friends was an apt way to enter the next 500 years in hope.

Such festivities may have distracted you from another anniversary: the dedication of our main facility on 22 October 1967. The half century since then buffers us from this daring period in Lutheran theological education. After false starts, four schools ceased separate operations, pooled resources, and reconvened on the South Side of Chicago. Moving to a global urban center near a major university was a bold venture, but with losses for these partners. Publicity from the 1967 dedication stressed the former and muted the latter. Photos instead showed the confident mien of those who seemed sure of whatever they did.

Since this year’s anniversary was on a Sunday, our events came a few days later. After a worship that used parts of the original dedication, we processed to the “cornerstone” (just a plaque), followed by a school-wide luncheon. The day included testimonies about what learning in this locale has meant to various folks, from current students all the way back to Martin Marty and Phil Hougen, who saw the dedication firsthand. Some noted our building’s distinctive traits (admired and derided), but most remarked how this place nurtured challenge and formation. There were honest words, including how we came to be located here.

Our presence was due to displacement. A full account would also include the removal of Potawatomie and Miami clans centuries ago, but closer to 1967 the displaced were residents of seven apartment buildings where our main facility now stands. Stories from back then differ, assigning blame across a wide cast of characters, with varied tales of impact and harm. The net result was still the same, though. We are here because others left. In this, we are complicit. We were glad to arrive some 50 years ago, but as Phil Hougen dryly added, “the neighbors were not so happy to see us coming.” He was not alone in recalling their dismay.

In our curriculum and beyond, we say that place matters. Context is no accidental space for learning but a key resource. So what does our place at 55th and University teach those being formed for visionary leadership in our church? Among other things, we learn that we cannot ignore our past, however fraught and shameful. Paying attention to the needs in this place and God’s work in our midst includes recalling the harm we have done, remembering without being paralyzed. Honest confession is the first step toward a new destination.

I recently heard an interview with Titus Kaphar, an artist who critiques art history through the lens of racial injustice. He’s been wondering what to do with public monuments erected by white supremacists to promote racist values. Since their history cannot be erased, he calls for their amendment. “When we have a situation when we want to change a law in the American Constitution, we don’t erase the other one,” Kaphar says. “Alongside that is an amendment, something that says, ‘This is where we were, but this is where we are right now.’ I figure if we can do that, then that will help us understand a little bit about where we’re going.”

Our school’s story needs such amendment. We want to live in and for our place on the South Side out of a strong sense that ministry formation is enriched by this setting. We must first engage this with penitent clarity about our past. And then, we can amend that story by adding another, embracing this place as a treasure that calls for caring, sustained stewardship. With these as systole and diastole of our school’s heart, we can understand a bit better not only where we’re going, but also how to get there.

James Nieman
President
The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, a seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, forms visionary leaders to bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ.

Visit www.lstc.edu or call 773.256.0700 for more information about LSTC’s programs, conferences and special events.

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LSTC
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
Erik Christensen called as pastor to the community and director of worship

The Rev. Erik Christensen has accepted a call to serve as pastor to the community and director of worship at LSTC. He began his service early in the fall semester.

“I am delighted that Pastor Christensen has accepted this call. He brings considerable gifts in leading vibrant public witness, preaching and presiding, and in his care for all people,” said James Nieman, president. “We are blessed that Erik’s wise and innovative pastoral experience will now enrich our school. I am sure we have much to learn from him and with him.”

Christensen said, “Throughout my ministry I have been passionate about identifying diverse emerging leaders for the church and cultivating their gifts for ministry. Among the ELCA seminaries, LSTC is known for its commitments to racial diversity, urban ministry and public advocacy, commitments that necessarily create tension as they address structures of power and violence. Now, more than ever, the church needs pastors, deacons, students and scholars who can engage conflict purposefully for the sake of personal and societal transformation. I am honored to be called to carry out this work in partnership with the students, staff and faculty of LSTC.”

Connecting worship and justice

As pastor with St. Luke’s Lutheran Church of Logan Square since 2006, Christensen has consciously worked to build a community in which worship and the means of grace are experienced as inextricably connected to the work of justice. He is a frequent contributor to Augsburg Fortress’ Sundays & Seasons materials. He also is the co-author of Worship Matters: An Introduction to Worship and In These or Similar Words: Crafting Language for Worship. For the last year he has served as project director for a grant to the Logan Square Ecumenical Alliance from the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship to explore the connections between storytelling, testimony and Christian proclamation. He has been a supervising pastor to interns and field education students from LSTC.

Christensen also has been a leader in a number of organizations working on a wide range of justice issues. He served as co-chair of the board of directors of Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries and is a member of Proclaim, a Lutheran community of LGBTQ+ rostered ministers, seminarians and candidates for ministry. He was on the board of the Logan Square Neighborhood Association and helped found the Logan Square Ecumenical Alliance, which received LSTC’s Community of the Cross Award earlier this year. Christensen also served as the vice-president of the board for The Beatitudes Society, now Justice Ministry Education at Auburn Seminary.

Christensen received a master of divinity degree with a certificate in Black Church Studies from Candler School of Theology, Emory University. He received a master of sacred theology degree with an emphasis in Christian ethics from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia and a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Macalester College.

Pastor to the community and director of worship

The pastor to the community and director of worship position has been shaped to be highly relational and collaborative. The pastor to the community will relate to all members of the LSTC community and collaborate with faculty and staff concerning worship, spiritual formation and pastoral care. The pastor to the community will also help lead engagement with the world outside the seminary’s walls.

The Advisory Committee for this search was made up of students, faculty and staff. They invited seven of the 20 applicants for the position to an interview and unanimously recommended Christensen for the call.

Katie M. Deaver appointed new associate director of admissions

Katie M. Deaver began as associate director of admissions at LSTC on August 15. She is responsible for helping to recruit students to all of LSTC’s six degree programs.

“With Katie's devotion for the church and passion for theological education, her gifts and skills will be an asset to the work of raising up and equipping leaders both at LSTC and within the wider church community,” said Matt James, LSTC’s director of admissions.

Deaver said, “I am delighted to be back at LSTC and serving in this new role. I cannot wait to begin recruiting the next generation of church leaders for the LSTC community as well as for the larger church and the Lutheran academic community.”

Deaver received a doctor of philosophy degree in
theology from LSTC in May. She also earned master of theology and a master of arts (theological studies) degrees from LSTC. Her scholarship focuses on feminist interpretations of atonement theology, sexual ethics, gender and gender identity, women in Christian traditions, Lutheran theology and related implications for lay women, victimization and oppression within contemporary society, and the role of theology in current events. She has contributed articles to the online journal *Feminism and Religion*. In 2015, she received the Nancy A. Hardesty Memorial Scholarship from EEWC-Christian Feminism Today. Deaver is a musician who has served as director of music ministry at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Glenview, Ill., since 2015. She was director of music at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Des Plaines from 2013 to 2015.

In addition to her studies, Chukka also is serving as the assistant to the director of worship at LSTC. Learn more about the WomenLead Scholarship at www.infaithfound.org/newsgrants/.

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**LSTC receives ATS Innovation Grant to train collaborative teams to produce sharable learning tools**

LSTC has received a $50,000 Innovation Grant from the Association of Theological School (ATS) for its project, “Network-Driven Sharables for Public Church Leadership.” The grant will support the creation of “sharables”—online media such as short videos, webinars, or group guides that can be used by church leaders and congregations.

“This grant helps us build on our initial success of congregational engagement efforts that we call the Public Church Network,” said Esther Menn, dean and vice president for academic affairs. “We know that there is a hunger among congregation leaders and members to learn more about the very topics we are teaching in LSTC’s public church curriculum.”

During the current academic year, faculty and alumni will collaborate on creating three sharable learning tools. The ATS initiative will help build the capacities of LSTC faculty and staff to share their meaningful and relevant research with congregational leaders. The product of their collaborations will be disseminated through the online Public Church Network and other seminary and congregational channels. A project leadership team will assess the process and write a framework for other ATS schools to create their own network-driven sharables.

LSTC is one of 58 seminaries in the US and Canada to receive an ATS Innovation Grant. These grants are made possible through funding from the Lilly Endowment for the development and implementation of new educational models and practices.

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**LSTC seeks to fill three faculty positions**

This fall LSTC launched three searches to fill faculty positions in New Testament, Church and Society and Ethics, and Homiletics.

For the New Testament position, Barbara Rossing, chair of the search committee noted that they are seeking "an early career scholar and gifted teacher who connects the academy and church. It is important that they are able to help students relate biblical texts to Christian life and..."
ministry in the world and also be able to teach in the PhD program.”

Lea Schweitz, chair of the search committee for the position in church and society and ethics, said, “The ideal candidate will bring a dynamic engagement between the life of the world and church through publicly-engaged scholarship, contextual pedagogy, and culturally competent teaching. We are looking for a collaborative, early career teacher-scholar who can prepare our masters’ and doctoral students for leadership in a public church.”

The search in homiletics will fill the Axel Jacob Gerda Maria (Swanson) Carlson Chair of Homiletics, a tenure-eligible position with the beginning rank of assistant professor. Preferential consideration will be given to persons rostered in the ELCA or its ecumenical partners.

Application deadlines for each position were in early to mid-November. Candidates will be brought to campus during the spring semester and recommendations presented to the Board of Directors at the May 2018 meeting.

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**LSTC commemorates 500th anniversary of the Reformation with ecumenical preaching series**

At its worship services during the fall semester, LSTC invited preachers from other Christian denominations to reflect on what the Protestant Reformation means for them. This series of sermons was part of LSTC’s observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. LSTC welcomed the guest preachers during regular Monday and Wednesday worship services in the Augustana Chapel.

LSTC faculty members planned the series. “We want to listen to other partners or ‘heirs’ of the Reformation tradition,” said the Rev. Dr. Klaus-Peter Adam, associate professor of Old Testament and chair of the planning committee. “What does it mean for our ecumenical siblings to reflect on Luther’s theology of ‘salvation through grace alone’? This 500th anniversary is not about Lutherans, it is about the Reformation as an event relevant for ecumenical churches, Protestant and Roman Catholic.”

The Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III, pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, was the first guest in the sermon series. View his September 27 sermon on LSTC’s website or Facebook page.

Other guest preachers were the Rev. Dr. Nancy Bedford, Georgia Harkness Professor of Applied Theology, Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill., preaching from the Anabaptist tradition on October 2. On October 4, alumna the Rev. Dr. Patricia Cuyatti Chavez, Lutheran World Federation Area Secretary, Latin America/Caribbean preached from the Lutheran perspective.

Dr. Kenneth Sawyer, professor of church history, McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago (Presbyterian U.S.A.), preached on October 16. On October 23, Dr. Steed Davidson, associate professor of Hebrew Bible at McCormick, and a United Methodist, preached. The Rev. Dr. Tom Haverly, an Episcopal priest, preached on October 25. On October 31, LSTC celebrated Lutheran and Roman Catholic ecumenical relations with a Service of the Word with Catholic Theological Union President Mark Francis as the guest preacher. On November 1 the Rev. Dr. Joanne Lindstrom, Jean and Frank Mohr Director of Experiential Education and Field Studies, associate professor of ministry at McCormick preached from a Baptist perspective during a Eucharist Service for All Saints Day.

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Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III with one of his parishioners, the Rev. Dr. Linda Thomas, LSTC professor of theology and anthropology
Spiritual formation is how we live our lives
Serving as Cornelsen Chair is Gordon Straw’s lifelong dream

by Julie B. Sevig

It's no surprise that cooking is Gordon Straw’s connecting point to spirituality.

“The hospitality of food and drink—not only is it a passion of mine, but it quite literally is something I got from my mom and my grandma, who was my spiritual mentor,” he said.

In July, Straw joined the LSTC faculty and staff as Cornelsen Chair for Spiritual Formation and Coordinator of Candidacy. Just as he helps the LSTC community as associate professor teaching and tending to spiritual formation, he enjoys telling about how his extended family shaped his faith and views on hospitality.

His grandmother was a strong German woman who married an American Indian man, and together they raised 16 children on the White Earth Indian Reservation north of Detroit Lakes, Minn. With that many aunts and uncles and cousins, Straw says it seemed like every time he sat at his grandmother’s table there was always someone he didn’t know—either a relative or someone his grandmother had welcomed to the table.

“She would make up a plate for someone in need. The coffee—in a glass percolator—was always on the stove. More than anyone she showed me the meaning of hospitality. It’s more than having polite manners or party etiquette. It is about making sure everyone feels that they belong,” Straw said.

When he and his brother and two uncles, all close in age, would “get rowdy” as small children his grandmother would sit them down on the living room couches and have them sing from the Missouri–Synod hymn book.

Clearly, his Grandma Elvera profoundly influenced his faith and life, and her death during the middle of his first year at then–Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary was devastating. It took him some time to “get back,” he said. It also changed the course of his career path toward ordination and parish ministry, rather than his original “call” to teach.

“Serving as the Cornelsen Chair at LSTC is the fulfillment of a very long dream,” he said.

After his first call (an inner city parish), Straw had two “tours of duty,” as he calls them, at the ELCA’s churchwide organization, leading American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries and Lay Schools for Ministry. After leaving churchwide, he discovered in himself a passion and preference for interim ministry. Congregations like things to go smoothly, he said, adding that his personality type prefers changes and challenges. That made him perfect for 11 interim ministry calls (half- and full-time) in the Metropolitan Chicago Synod over the course of 15 years. Included on Straw’s extensive vita are two culinary awards (“hot” category at a chili cook off and “Silver Spatula” award for beef brisket), reminders that not only that food and spirituality are related, but that cooking is an area of interest and expertise for him.

Another influence

Steven Charleston, an Episcopal priest and bishop, was also instrumental in Straw’s spiritual formation during his seminary years. As dean to students of color, he helped Straw come to terms with identities that are both/and instead of either/or.

“My whole life I had struggled with being cross blood (mixed race), never feeling I belonged anywhere and always having to choose between White and Indian. He taught me I can be both Christian and Indian. It was a great awakening for me.”

Being a member of the Brothertown Indian Nation has influenced his faith and teaching as well. Straw has written and lectured extensively on Native American Christian Theology.

The Western Christian God is too small, he says. God, as portrayed by modern Western Christians, seems only concerned about human beings, not the whole of creation.

“Native people don’t separate God. The origin of the universe is itself spiritual, and everything we do comes from Spirit: ways of living on earth, our traditional practices; living well and in harmony with others in creation; loyalty not just to humans, but to all creation.”

At LSTC, Straw hopes to communicate to the community that spiritual formation is about how we live our lives every day and that how we live honors God and those around us, as well as ourselves.

We are formed through life experience, he says, as much as through traditional spiritual practices.

“Spiritual direction is primarily directed to our inner selves, spiritual practices are primarily directed toward our neighbors. Both are intertwined and necessary. Yet, that’s why spiritual practices are a good fit for LSTC and public church,” he said.
Construction crews completed faculty offices and classrooms just in time for students to walk through the doors in September 1967. But the Chapel Auditorium was “nowhere near complete”—it was a three-story bowl of concrete steps.

The building was dedicated and “officially” opened its doors on October 22, 1967, and the predecessor schools that formed LSTC in 1962 finally came together as a community in one location. The Rev. Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, president of the Lutheran Church in America, presided at the service held at Rockefeller Chapel. He was assisted by members of the board, administration, faculty, and students. Thousands of people attended the worship service and others crowded around the school for a ritual passing of the keys to the building from the construction company and architects to Dr. Robert Marshall, president of the Illinois Synod and chair of the Building Committee, and finally to LSTC President Stewart Herman Jr.

The architecturally distinctive building created for the Lutheran School of Theology is 50 years old now. Those who were here when the doors opened have stories to tell. And so does everyone else who has loved or complained about this building over the years.

Its endless flexibility has let LSTC reconfigure classrooms and meeting spaces. We have even demolished that bowl of concrete and replaced it with a two-story chapel and created a third-floor suite of meeting rooms and offices above it.

Like any 50-year-old, the building is showing its age, and that’s why upgrades are in the works both for the main building and the 100-year-old apartment buildings and are LSTC’s student housing.

For now, here’s a glimpse of LSTC in her original splendor.
LSTC takes steps to become an anti-racist institution

by Jan Boden

In its publications and online presence, LSTC shows the racial and cultural diversity of its community. It is a characteristic about which LSTC is proud. The school has always been a multicultural community and has prepared leaders for a global church. It is written into LSTC’s mission, vision and values statements and incorporated into LSTC’s brand. But as much as we may claim that we value diversity and multiculturalism, persons with black or brown bodies have sometimes experienced the opposite at LSTC.

Naming and dismantling institutional racism at LSTC

During his student days, Pastor Michael Russell (1999, MDiv) and others advocated for LSTC holding annual anti-racism training for everyone at the school. In 2015, President James Nieman asked Russell, now a leader in Chicago ROAR (Regional Organizing for Antiracism), for advice about how to do just that. It led to a partnership between LSTC and Chicago ROAR and a four-year plan to put LSTC on the path to becoming an anti-racist institution.

“Institutionally, there were always triggers and crisis moments at LSTC around incompatibility and friction between cultures as well as outright institutional racism,” Russell said. “Things would flare up as the result of something a professor would say to stereotype a group of people or to discount or discredit a student’s life experiences, statement like, ‘Black people do…’ or ‘Latinos will…’ or ‘Arabs are…’ Sometimes decisions would be made impacting people of color and supported by invoking policy that was observably set-aside as exception for others. Those incidents would work their way up to the Dean’s or President’s Office or to the Board. LSTC dealt with them with a crisis management approach. Corrective actions were taken, people would be reprimanded. And students would wait for the next incident and flare up. What we didn’t do was to look at the institutional culture that allowed this behavior to happen cyclically and systemically.”

Now LSTC is being intentional about looking at its institutional culture and the ways its policies and structures support racism and other “isms.”

Two years ago we contracted, planned and structured ways to move LSTC into becoming an anti-racist institution. Racism permeates every institution in the U.S. and that is true for LSTC, too. Institutions in the U.S. will operate out of a culture of whiteness, which we refer to as white supremacy, until they take deliberate steps to change,” Russell said.

The four-year plan engages students, faculty, staff, administration and board members in annual anti-racism and critical cultural competency workshops.

He added, “When we consciously acknowledge that the institution is operating this way then we can see where systemic racism is a force that works against our goals and our ideals. We identify and initiate strategies that address the ways we operate out of institutional racism. We begin to ask the right questions: How do we recognize that the culture of whiteness is the way that we do things? How do we change our institutional culture to acknowledge this? How do we change funding, curricula, and administrative policies and actions to shift institutional culture?”

The workshops are meant to create a critical mass of institutional stakeholders who hold the school accountable for changing its culture. They are the bearers of the new institutional identity. They will reshape the institution and everyone who comes through its doors.

“We are still building up this new constituency which will create the new institutional identity for LSTC,” Russell said. “We need to think about the ways our ‘deliverables’ will be produced at LSTC. I’m excited about this because LSTC contributes to shaping the identity of the ELCA and that contributes to shaping Christendom.”

A sustained plan for anti-racism training

James Nieman describes how institutional racism at LSTC became increasingly apparent to him after he became president of the seminary in 2012.

“Talking with alumni, mainly, but not exclusively African American alumni, I heard them say how racism had affected their experience at LSTC. They are grateful for their education, but it was a hard journey for them. Racism is a long-standing, historic problem for LSTC. There is a long history of avoidance or reactivity. I’m not sure there has ever been a sustained plan for anti-racism training.”

In spring 2015, a small group of students, faculty and staff met with Nieman to share instances of racism they had experienced at LSTC. “Their comments were gripping and disturbing,” he said. “I agreed to make a statement and to
follow through on various plans to address racism. It was a catalyst to get us started.”

Nieman began by talking with Russell, whom he knew from LSTC’s Alumni Board, and his work with Chicago ROAR. “I told him that I was not interested in a one-time training. I wanted to set up an ongoing two-year cycle of training so every student, coming and leaving, would take part. Staff and faculty would have training every year. And we want to have ongoing work with staff and faculty—an advisory or consulting team. That’s still coming.”

He added, “I was wary of this seeming like a top-down impetus. This needs broad ownership. On the other hand, the president needs to set the tone on behalf of the school and is visible on this. I completely back this.”

The revelatory moment

The Critical Cultural Competency Workshop of Chicago ROAR and the Anti-Racism Analysis Workshops are different from more confrontational anti-racism training of the past. Russell agreed. “We don’t want to get people ‘armored up’ by the training. We want revelatory learning, the ‘aha’ moments that compel people to want to act, so that we gain partners in this work. We want to incite passion for the work and the goal of institutional change. Those passionate people often become supporters and leaders on the team and in the work. At the end of four years Chicago ROAR and LSTC will review the plan, determine how well it worked and revise and extend the commitment. One of my proudest moments has been collaborating to establish the ongoing partnership with LSTC and Chicago ROAR.”

Nieman said, “As the school makes these changes, we will experience something different at LSTC. How do we carry that seed? How do we use it to engage the larger social conflicts of our time? We’re addressing white privilege and racism. But how do we incorporate this cultural shift into what students will do [when they graduate]? That’s why I’m passionate about this topic.”
In the summer of 1967 “the new” LSTC building on 55th Street in Hyde Park was still under construction even though classes would begin in September. Several of us seminarians had been hired for the summer to “make ready” the apartments in the newly acquired buildings adjacent to the new building. We were to clean each apartment and put a fresh coat of paint on the walls. As we did so, we listened to music on a little radio one of the crew brought to work. During a brief news report we listened to Father James Groppi of Milwaukee being interviewed about a nightly march advocating for the passage of “an open housing ordinance” in Milwaukee. On the previous night while leading a group of some 200 people advocating for a fair housing ordinance to be passed, they were met by angry white counter protesters. This was four years after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s March on Washington where he gave his memorable “I Have A Dream” speech. During the radio interview, Father Groppi asked for support from his fellow clergy. As soon as we heard his words we put down our paint brushes and after a few minutes’ conversation we knew we had to go to Milwaukee. Not knowing if we would be arrested or hurt (the previous night’s march had encountered violence) we did not want to embarrass the new seminary so we decided to inform (not ask his permission) Stuart Herman, the new president of LSTC. He had a make-shift office set up downstairs under the library in the foyer. He graciously listened to us and then said, “I wish I could go with you.” I knew then I had made the right decision to come to LSTC. I knew I was “home.”

‘Don’t wait up for us’

After meeting with Dr. Herman we went home, put on our clerical collars and those of us who were married telephoned our wives at their places of work to let them know of our decision and “not to wait up for us.” It was going to be a long night and we didn’t know what to expect. We car pooled to a Milwaukee church where we gathered with all who would be marching that evening. We knew in our hearts this was “living the Gospel.” The march was nonviolent from our side. The white counter marchers were elbow to elbow with us for what seemed like an eternity. There were more of them than us. I remember a woman beside me saying “don’t look them in their eyes” and “no matter what happens, keep on going.” There were verbal insults hurled at us. I remember being spit upon. I don’t remember too much else.

Fast forward to 2017

In 2017, 54 years after Martin Luther King Jr.’s March on Washington we witnessed on television the tragic events in Charlottesville, Va.

Months before Charlottesville, the National Action Network (NAN) led by the Rev. Al Sharpton had planned a Minister's March on Washington for August 28 to commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s original March on Washington and to remind people that we are still working for the Dream. The march was also being planned to remind the Trump administration of the need for equal voting rights, healthcare, criminal justice reform and economic justice for all people. (Our home state of North Carolina has one of the worst records for oppressing voting rights of minorities.)

The Sunday morning after the Charlottesville tragedy we saw Rev. Sharpton look into the TV cameras and ask for 1,000 clergy and faith leaders to come and walk with him from the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial to the Justice Department building on August 28, the 54th Anniversary of King’s March on Washington. My wife, Dianne, and I knew we had to be there. We registered immediately and made plans to go to Washington. Clergy and religious leaders were asked to wear vestments or clothing associated with their faith tradition. Once again I put on my clerical collar. I also wore an African-American stole that had been given to me. And, Dianne and I both wore our rainbow crosses. There were rabbis, imams, Buddhist monks, religious leaders and laity from many faith groups. This march was different from other marches I have been in. This march was one of the most uplifting theological experiences I have had. It was well organized. It was also evident the D.C. police were not going to let this become another Charlottesville. And, I didn't get spit on this time.

The speakers prior to the march were profound. A rabbi reminded us that our Jewish brothers and sisters had been marching for more than 5,000 years. Another speaker reminded us when we march “we are praying with our legs.” Another speaker recalled King’s words, “As long as one of us is not free, none of us are free.” There was also a moment of silence for Heather Heyer, the individual who lost her life in Charlottesville.
Marching made me remember

As we marched down the streets of Washington I thought about Travon Martin. I thought about the people I marched with in Milwaukee and other places. I thought about this being 54 years after the first March in Washington and that we are still marching. I thought about being together at seminary with Harold Varner, and how we used to get together every evening for conversation and a drink after hours of study. We each had our study on the glass porch in the building on 5428 Woodlawn. I remember going to Operation Breadbasket with him on Saturday mornings. He played the drums for a little band that provided music for the Breadbasket meeting.

He introduced Dianne and me to Rev. Jesse Jackson and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on more than one occasion. And Harold was with Dr. King when he was shot on that fatal day, April 4, 1968, at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tenn.

I thought about Rebecca, Ruth, Lilly and Ladocia, African-American women who looked after me from the earliest time I can remember through junior high school. I thought about John Howard Griffin and his book, Black Like Me and what a powerful influence it was on my life. And I thought about LSTC and wondered if there were others from Hyde Park, and particularly LSTC, marching here today.

The National Action Network hoped for 1,000 ministers and religious leaders for this year’s 2017 march. More than 3,000 registered and more than 5,000 showed up to march and bear witness to truth, justice and equality for all people.

Again, it was one of the most uplifting theological experiences of my life. As long as there is bigotry and inequality, we as people of faith and we who have had the privilege of a theological education such as I experienced at LSTC, must continue to be activists and advocates for others.

I believe the Holy One dwells in all of us. And, I believe we are all called to help the world become a better place for all to live. LSTC students, faculty, staff, alumni, all of us are called to be activists for the Gospel and the civil rights of all people regardless of the color of their skin, faith tradition or sexual orientation. We are all members of the same human family on this wonderful planet we all call home.

The Rev. Dr. Jon Fogleman is a retired pastor and a member of the LSTC Class of 1970.
Making the gospel real online and to those in need
Third in a three-part series featuring LSTC alums serving mission starts or revitalized congregations
by Julie B. Sevig

Coffee shop epiphany leads to a blank slate

Jason Chesnut was in line at a Baltimore coffee shop when he realized where his new congregation needed to be. Not in the coffee shop, necessarily, but on the phones everyone was scrolling through. He assumed the customers were absorbed in social media, and decided that is where this new worshiping community needed to be.

That's right, Chesnut's congregation is online, and he's good with that.

His first call after graduating from LSTC was in rural Wisconsin. While there, he had the opportunity to meet with Wolfgang Herz-Lane, then-bishop of the Delaware-Maryland Synod. Herz-Lane had been working with First English Lutheran Church in Baltimore, which had an endowment to create a new worshiping community, no strings attached.

"That was the genesis of it," explained Chesnut, who had been trained as a mission developer. "Brand new, brave, forward-thinking."

The endowment was created before First English even knew who would take up the challenge, but Chesnut followed up with an "amazing conversation" with synod leaders.

"I had to listen to the spirit to start something new because I knew I may never have that opportunity again... It made sense—now in 2017, and back in 2013 when this happened," Chesnut said, adding a nod to the Reformation: "It's all about reforming and Luther. Social media is the 21st Century printing press."

But what would it look like?

Why, a blank slate, of course. And the chance to ask: what's not working in the church, and how to connect with sacred history. The answer is explained at slateproject.org: "We are an experiment in Christian community, recognizing that people gather both online and face-to-face in order to follow Jesus... We don't have Sunday morning worship, nor do we have a building. What we do have is a vision for a passionate, intentional community. Join us online and ITF (in the flesh)."

Slate Project offers image-based web content: #Yourwelcome on Wednesdays and #tbt on Thursdays; #slatespeak, a live-chat on Twitter Thursday evenings; and Jesus Coffee blog series released every Monday. Every first Saturday, a new video or podcast is released.

Face-to-face gatherings are #BreakingBread, weekly dinner liturgy on Monday evenings, and #WakeUpWordUp, Recovering the Bible as a story worth telling, on Wednesdays.

Slate Project received three years of funding, which has been spread over four years. With Presbyterian partners and others, Slate has created much and engaged many. They've got the social media numbers to prove it.

"I wanted to create content that engages people in the 21st Century," he said. "I'm not going to knock on doors or cold call on people. If one-third of the world's population is on Facebook or Twitter, that's a hell of a reach."

"Reach. That's a great Christian witnessing word. How many people are we reaching?"

Chesnut calls Slate "really traditional" in that it mimics the 50s, but not the 1950s: "I want to go back to the year 50, to what communities on the margin looked like. Paul writing letters, storytelling in an oral culture where they learned by heart. Communities on the margin connecting whatever way they could."

He advises church leaders to not shy away from the reality of technology: "Lean into it and use what people are already using."

To those who question the lack of personal contact, Chesnut says he's OK with online conversations: "This sort of community will never take the place of what can happen face-to-face, but it doesn't have to; it's just another way to connect with people."

He likens it to the heated discussion in his first parish regarding putting the church newsletter online.

"We're not taking away their culture, but we have to speak in the language of the day. We've gone from oral culture to print culture to digital culture."

Pastoring the www

Chesnut is showing the church there are different ways to be a pastor.

"I'm not really a parish pastor. My pastoring is the worldwide web. I do pastoral care online, sometimes publicly and sometimes privately. I'm in relationship with people I've never met. I'm able to be with them online, and they'll never step foot in church. We are community for them."

When talking to church leaders about social media, he urges congregations to "ease into it," but also to not ignore...
it. Don’t get into the mindset that social media is bad, just different, Chesnut said.

He suggests simple things like making sure the church’s website and Facebook pages are up-to-date. For instance, if your last Facebook post mentions the rummage sale of 2016, you’re in trouble. There are lots of resources for creating content, images.

“It’s a matter of 21st Century hospitality,” he said. “Have free Wi-fi in your worship space; allow people to be on their phone so they can check in or tweet out. Encourage them, don’t shame them. Twenty-five years ago you wanted to see people writing down notes from your sermon. Sure, it could have been the grocery list. But now they tweet out and check in to tell others they’re at your church. Don’t automatically think they’re not paying attention.”

The more parish pastors embrace digital culture, the better the response will be. But we’re about 50 years too late if we’re just now doing media stuff, he said, because social media is changing that fast.

But his message for hospitality and welcome is up-to-date: “Dress and pray in the way you’re comfortable. Use your devices. Not technical? Great, you’re welcome here just as you are, too.”

'Sometimes bad business is good ministry’

Not only does Salem literally go door-to-door with water, Villarreal and other leaders are constantly at work with city and state government administrations to hold them accountable. It’s a challenging problem, she said, because the state also caused the problem of contaminated water that, more than two years later, still leaves huge portions of the city without safe water.

In September, the state closed some 100 sites that have been supplying water to residents and shut down the state warehouse. Salem, with nine other congregations, stepped up when asked to take over door-to-door bottle water service on behalf of the city.

Salem has been a curb-side distribution site since early 2016. Water provided by donations, the state, food bank and service groups sustained the effort. Mostly, people drove up and helped themselves. The water didn’t even last two hours, she said.

Now, a box truck makes curbside deliveries to 280 households each week—14 pallets of water. Each household receives four cases a week.

If Salem and others hadn’t taken on the task, residents wouldn’t have water. “There is nothing more basic to life than water. So many people are looking for water, are scared and anxious, hoarding and afraid they won’t have access to clean water,” she said, even though the state claims Flint’s water quality meets Michigan municipal standards.
But the water system is not stable. As the city replaces lead pipes, digging in the ground disturbs the lead, she explained. And although the city urges residents to use a filter, hot water can’t be run through the filter, she said. Boiling water isn’t an option either. Since lead is a metal and water evaporates, boiling actually increases the lead level. To this day, many Flint households still don’t have safe hot tap water, and must continually test their water. The city also has struggled to maintain chlorine levels in the water system. The possibility of another Legionnaires outbreak or other bacterial epidemic is a concern.

Redevelopment and more

Salem is an ELCA redevelopment site, but as Villarreal explains, “In order to redevelop we must redevelop the city, the community. If the community doesn’t find peace and safety or basic needs aren’t met, the congregation won’t find transformation either.”

“That is how the Gospel is lived out here at Salem... God stands with the poor and vulnerable. Sometimes bad business is good ministry.”

Salem is far from financially sustainable, but neither is the city, she said, adding: “A gross injustice happened because the city was deemed disposable. I have seen the community of faith be the bedrock of where people find hope, the voice of faith challenging government, advocating for resources and supporting change. This should never have happened anywhere and it should never have happened here.”

What drives their hope is that they’re still a voice at the table. Salem leaders believe they have a moral obligation to tell the state that it needs to ensure resources are provided

Lutherans still call

The other thing that keeps them going is the care and concern of Lutherans and other Christians across the country. Salem, the only ELCA congregation in Flint, still gets phone calls from people who want to help.

“The media are not here anymore, but Lutherans and other people of faith have not forgotten us. They are a source of hope and strength that is incredible.”

Although Villarreal jokes that there was no LSTC class in “logistics of warehouse management,” she says learning to interpret scripture with a social justice lens, and understanding the church in the world prepared her well for her ministry. Her urban emphasis at seminary also prepared her for ministry in a congregation that is 50 percent people of color (Black, Hispanic and Native American) and a community that is predominately African American.

“Salem’s very identity is diversity,” she said, adding that they are socially and economically diverse as well.

Villarreal credits the mission class Stephen Bouman, executive director of the ELCA’s Domestic Mission unit, taught at seminary with nudging her toward redevelopment, as well as encouragement by Ruben Duran, director of new congregational starts.

It also helps that she is a Flint native, and grew up as a member of Our Risen Lord, a mission partner of Salem for many years.

“I’ve always had my foot in Flint and this city is as much a part of me as anything. When this crisis happened, it helped that my roots are here and I’m connected here and it helps keep me here. Some would have looked at this task and said ‘I’m gone.’ But this is home and I’m dedicated to seeing transformation in this city and being part of this congregation for years to come.’”

Her commitment to Flint, and especially her neighborhood, has earned her the nickname “hood pastor.”

And that’s fine with her.

“The state is pulling out and who’s left? The church. This is an untraditional role for the church. But it is where I believe God is.”
It wasn't until she asked her friend, Blaire, if she could go with her to Lutheran-Episcopalian campus ministry events at the University of Tennessee that Robin Lovett heard and understood that she could be both “LGBT and Christian.”

“I had never heard anything like this before, that God loves everyone. It was revolutionary and I kept coming back, every week,” Lovett said.

She is one of 42 new students this fall at LSTC, and one of 11 new Public Church Fellows. She grew up largely unchurched, partly the influence of a grandmother who didn’t want her to be involved in church. Her family life was difficult. She was a non-Christian in the Bible Belt, where she thought she “couldn’t be both queer and Christian.” But her friend Blaire was kind, generous, progressive, and involved in campus ministry, so Lovett asked if she could go with.

From her first visit, she wrote in a notebook all she heard (even the songs) absorbing everything she was learning about faith.

Then, she was baptized, with Blaire as her sponsor/godmother. John Tirro, pastor of the U of T campus ministry, was also a huge influence.

Two scripture stories have also been pivotal: the 12 year old girl who is healed, and the woman with the flow of blood. The woman, she said, had a whole different life after touching the hem of Jesus’ robe.

Lovett’s life is different, too. She uses words like joy and peace to describe what she felt at her baptism, even “miraculous.”

“There was something different inside of me. A spiritual experience.”

In a written introduction from LSTC’s new students, Lovett wrote: “I first became involved in ministry and felt the call to become a pastor when I was working in a campus ministry called Tyson House. While leading Bible studies, preparing our space for worship and working to open a food pantry, I realized that there was nothing else I would rather do.”

This jibes with another favorite quote Lovett shares from Quaker theologian and author Parker Palmer, who in Let Your Life Speak, wrote: “Vocation…is something you can’t not do.”

While discerning where to attend seminary, Lovett felt called to LSTC because she believes she “could do a lot of hands-on ministry here.”

And she no doubt already is—at her new Public Church Fellows site.

As a first-year MDiv student, Lovett’s excitement for her life at seminary carries into the fall—and hopefully into the winter. She visited during a Seminary Sampler last February on a day it was 65 degrees, and famously said Chicago’s winter weather “didn’t seem too bad.”

Hopefully, the winter weather won’t deter Lovett from her love of the outdoors—biking, gardening, camping and hiking. “It really doesn’t matter what I’m doing, it’s most certainly better outside.” She also loves reading, playing with her dog and baking bread.

Lovett recognizes that many seminarians have grown up in the church, but says she’s not ashamed of not having a background in the church and in the faith. “I don’t have to put on a pretense that the academy requires of people.”

Here, she knows her spirituality and growing faith will be honored and nurtured, she said.

“I’m excited about chapel, because worship grounds me and allows me to be in the world but not of the world. And I’m ready to ask questions and excited to learn more deeply. I hope to deepen my faith and develop spiritually, read challenging and interesting things, and learn how to care and advocate for individuals and communities effectively and faithfully.”
LSTC honors six distinguished alumni

The 2017 Distinguished Alumni Awards were presented on October 11 during the annual Leadership Conference. The varied ministries of the honorees reflect the many “publics” of public church. Podcasts of the introductions of each honoree and their remarks are on LSTC’s Soundcloud. Find them by clicking on the orange icon at the bottom of any LSTC web page.

2017 Distinguished Alumni Award recipients
The Rev. James Bickel received the Faithful Servant Award. He serves as executive director of Outreach for Hope, Inc., a fund development and grant-making ministry of the Greater Milwaukee Synod of the ELCA. It provides financial support for congregations and ministries in the synod that are working in communities challenged by the effects of poverty. He served for 27 years at Ascension Lutheran Church in Waukesha, Wis., where he developed local and international mission partnerships and community ministries. He also served as assistant director of Lutheran Housing Corporation in Cleveland, Ohio. Bickel has been part of the ecumenical, social justice, peace, and community organizing efforts of Cleveland Lutheran Metropolitan Ministries, Ecumenical Partners for Peace and Justice of the Wisconsin Council of Churches, Peace Curriculum Task Force for ELCA Wisconsin and Upper Michigan synods, and the Clergy Caucus for SOPHIA. He earned a master of divinity degree from Christ Seminary-Seminex in 1977.

The Rev. Yehiel Curry received the Emerging Voice Award, given to an alumnus/a ordained within the last 10 years. He completed the Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) Program at LSTC after serving as a lay leader at Shekinah Chapel in Riverdale, Ill., for 10 years. He was ordained in 2009. In 2012, Shekinah Chapel became an organized congregation in the ELCA and called Curry to serve as their pastor. He earned a master of divinity from LSTC in 2013. Curry serves as board chair and camp director for Rescue, Release and Restore, Inc. NFP (RRR), a mentoring organization with programs in six cities. It houses the Safe in My Brothers Arms (SIMBA) and Safe in My Sisters Arms (SIMSA) camps for African-American youth. It is also a partner in the multicultural leadership MYLA Camp. Curry is founder and advisor of Riverdale Organized for Change (ROC), in Chicago’s south suburbs. He also serves on the Policy and Organizing board for the Community Renewal Society in Chicago. He is a...
frequent contributor to the ELCA worship resource, *Sundays and Seasons*. He has received numerous awards and recently shared God's word in Liberia and Rwanda before 35,000 at a youth gathering.

**The Rev. James P. Lapp** received the Excellence in Parish Ministry Award. Since 1996, Lapp has been the solo pastor of St. Stephen's Lutheran Church in Santa Cruz, Calif. He is the co-founder of the faith-based Communities Organized for relational Power in Action (COPA). The two-county, broad-based coalition of 25 institutions works on developing leadership for local justice issues, renewing congregations, affordable housing, access to health care, public safety, public education, and immigration. Partnering with a non-profit housing corporation, Lapp led his congregation to build 40 units of affordable senior housing on church land in a county that is annually among the top five unaffordable counties in the USA. St. Stephens' received the 2016 Affordable Residential Award from the *Silicon Valley Business Journal* and a 2016 United Way Community Hero Award for Santa Cruz County. Lapp graduated from LSTC’s dual degree program with the University of Chicago in 1994 with a master of divinity and master of social work.

**The Rev. Amy Reumann** received the Witness to the World Award. She is director of advocacy for the ELCA in Washington, DC, where she leads the advocacy ministry of the denomination as its representative with Congress, the Administration, and ecumenical and interfaith partners and coalitions. She previously served as director of Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania, as assistant to the bishop/urban coalition director of the Greater Milwaukee Synod, and as pastor or interim pastor of congregations in Wisconsin and New Jersey. Reumann also has served on numerous boards including the Diakon Wilderness Center Advisory Team, PA Interfaith Power and Light, the Reconciling in Christ Committee and the Anti-Racism Strategy Team for the Greater Milwaukee Synod, and the National Diakonia Board. She earned a master of divinity degree with a focus in cross-cultural ministry in 1992. She also holds a master of sacred theology in spiritual direction from the General Theological Seminary in New York, has received training in religious environmental leadership as a GreenFaith Fellow, and in 2016 completed the Newseum Certificate Program in Religion and Public Life.

**The Rev. Dr. Andrea Walker** received the Called to Lead Award. Since November 2012 she has been the area director for Madagascar, West and Central Africa for the Global Mission unit of the ELCA. She played a central role in interpreting the story of the Ebola virus crisis to the church to provide resources to Lutheran churches in West Africa. Walker has served as pastor to two very different congregations with the same name: St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Summit, N.J., with 800 members in a suburban setting, and St. John’s in the Bronx, N.Y., an inner-city congregation with 100 members. During the 1990s, while a student at LSTC, Walker helped organize several ELCA Youth Gatherings and served as keynote speaker and workshop presenter at other ELCA events. Since then, she has continued to preach and teach at conferences and events across the church. Walker earned her master of divinity degree in 1999 and a doctor of ministry in preaching from LSTC in 2007.

**Dr. George Zachariah** will receive the Specialized Ministry Award. He is professor and chairperson of the Department of Theology and Ethics, United Theological College in Bangalore, India. Zachariah is a leading scholar in Christian ethics, globalization and the environmental crisis. He has published scores of articles on a range of topics, many on earth justice and eco-theology. He is the author of *Gospel in a Groaning World: Climate Injustice and Public Witness* (2012, NCCI/CSS) and *Alternatives Unincorporated: Earth Ethics from the Grassroots* (2011, Equinox Press). He is the editor of six books, including the forthcoming *Towards Water Justice: A Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace: Theological Reflections* (2017, WCC) and *Religion and Health Justice: A Dialogical Approach to the Promotion of Well-Being*, co-edited with Ville Päivänsalo, Ayesha Ahmad, and Mari Stenlund (2017, Springer). Zachariah serves on the Standing Committee on Climate Change of the World Council of Churches and the Task Force on Human Sexuality of the National Council of Churches in India. He regularly lectures and gives presentations at conferences, consultations and universities around the world.

He earned a master of theology degree in 2002 and completed his doctor of philosophy degree with distinction in systematic theology at ethics in 2006.

**LSTC’s Distinguished Alumni/ae Awards**

Each year LSTC’s Alumni Board requests and reviews nominations for the Distinguished Alumni/ae Awards. For more information about the Distinguished Alumni/ae Awards or to submit a nomination, visit www.lstc.edu/alumni-friends/awards or contact Pastor Jennifer J. Thomas at jennifer.thomas@lstc.edu.
Pillars of the Seminary: One F.A.Q., many answers

by Keith Nelson (1970, MDiv), major and planned gifts officer

Ever since the Pillars of the Seminary recognition society was introduced, people have been contacting the Advancement Office asking, “What would be the best way for me, given my age and financial circumstances, to provide a legacy gift from my estate to LSTC?”

It’s a great question. A bequest in my will or trust? By beneficiary designation on my retirement account? Or...

In order for us to answer and help you make the best decisions, we need to know more specific information about your personal situation and priorities. For example, do you have other objectives beyond giving a legacy gift to LSTC, such as simplicity? Increased income during retirement? Minimizing income and/or capital gains taxes?

Do you want to augment your retirement income and also give a gift to LSTC from your estate?

A number of legacy gift arrangements can do both. You can plan your gift to LSTC to be given at the time of death of yourself and/or a surviving spouse, and you can establish an additional stream of income for yourself and/or your spouse during your retirement years.

Moreover, you can receive an immediate income tax charitable deduction amount for the gift which will go to LSTC in the future.

Additionally, you can use cash, stocks, or mutual funds, even real property—and potentially receive up to three kinds of income: ordinary, tax-free and capital gains.

Does this sound too good to be true? It’s not. Give the Advancement Office a call. Mike Dixon, Bob Buschkemper, or I will assist you in discovering the best way for you to establish your legacy gift and meet your personal goals and objectives.

One other thing: we’d love to recognize, thank, and invite everyone who has established, or is in the process of establishing, a legacy gift to benefit LSTC. The Pillars of the Seminary will hold its initial recognition event in May 2018. So that we can be as accurate as possible, please fill out the form attached to the envelope include in this issue of the Epistle and check the box “I have included LSTC in my estate plan.” Please return it to us at LSTC by April 1, 2018.

WE REMEMBER

George M. Meslow
1941–2017

The Rev. George Meslow served on LSTC’s Foundation Board of Trustees for 10 years. The Trustees are the stewards of LSTC’s endowment.

Meslow received the master of divinity degree from LSTC in 1967 and earned a second master’s degree from Yale Divinity School. He served as pastor of congregations in New Jersey and Connecticut from 1969–1989. He served as vice president of the Lutheran Home in Germantown, Pa., and then as president of Martin Luther Home Society in Lincoln, Neb. After moving to Florida, he served as an interim pastor throughout the central part of the state.

He died on August 23 at Arbor Trail Rehab in Inverness, Fla. A funeral service was held on August 28 at Hope Lutheran Church in Citrus Springs, Fla. He is survived by his wife of 50 years, Sandra, their two children and their spouses, and four grandchildren.

As both a pastor and later as a leader for agencies of the church, he used his gifts to invite others to share in those ministries through their financial support.

Mark P. Wiberg
1936–2017

The Rev. Mark P. Wiberg, along with his partner in life and ministry, Anne Wiberg, helped plan and execute LSTC’s Leadership Conferences from 2007 through 2009. They also contributed to the work of LSTC’s Academic Assessment Committee in 2013–14 related to accreditation and to the public church curriculum.

A well-loved leader in the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, Wiberg was part of the last class to be ordained in the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1962, the year he graduated from Augustana Theological Seminary. In his first five years of ministry, he established a new mission congregation in Hazel Crest, Ill. He then served congregations in Minneapolis for the next 20 years. He returned to the Chicago area in 1987 and served at Trinity Lutheran Church in Des Plaines until his retirement in 1998.

He died on August 30. A memorial service was held on September 16 at Trinity Lutheran Church, Des Plaines. He is survived by his wife, Anne, Their two sons and two grandsons.
Theologians gather at LSTC for ATT Global Lutheranism convocation

The Association of Teaching Theologians (ATT) held its annual convocation, “Global Lutheranism: Vitality and Challenges,” at LSTC July 31 to August 2.

As the world observes the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, Lutheranism finds itself in a very different place than in past centuries. Broadly speaking, the demographic vitality of Lutheranism as a global movement has shifted from Europe and North America towards Africa, Asia, Latin America, and elsewhere. Teaching theologians in the North American context attending the convocation sought to understand these shifts and how they call forth faithful theological responses.

“Global Lutheranism” featured a number of LSTC faculty, alumni and students, including Klaus-Peter Adam, Vítor Westhelle, John Nunes, Andrea Ng’weshimi, Carl-Eric Gentes, Francisco Herrera and Iren Raye. These and other scholars reflected on the sociological, theological, ethical, and pastoral dimensions to the global vitality of Lutheranism in the 21st century. Topics included inculturation of signature Lutheran themes, interfaith matters, biblical hermeneutics, “culture war” hotspots around the globe, authority issues at work in defining Lutheran identity, and ecclesiology. The convocation tried to provide as broad a representation of global voices in the convocation as possible.

About the Association of Teaching Theologians

The Association of Teaching Theologians is committed to communal theological reflection in service of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), and the church catholic for the sake of the Church’s witness to the Gospel in the world.

Its partners include the Asian Lutheran International Conference; the ELCA Conference of Bishops; the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL); Latino scholars; the Lutheran Alliance for Faith, Science and Technology; Lutheran ethicists, and Lutheran Women in Theological and Religious Studies.

LSTC faculty members José David Rodríguez and Vítor Westhelle welcomed fellow scholars Wanda Deifelt, professor of religion, Luther College, and Guillermo Hansen, professor and Martin Luther King Jr. Chair for Justice and Christian Community, Luther Seminary. Rodríguez, Westhelle and Hansen are also LSTC alumni.
International students gather at camp—ready to go again
by Julie B. Sevig

Campfires, canoeing and s'mores—that's what the International students and their families enjoyed at Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center (LOMC), Oregon, Ill., for two days in August.

It's what the international students do most summers, explained May May Latt, LSTC's international students coordinator. She has been to LOMC four times, two of those times with international students. This was the first time she's gone as leader and it was the biggest group that has gone. The Guild sponsors the annual event.

The 40 participants included nine families and 10 single students. They used both tents and rooms, hiked and swam in the pool, but Latt said the highlight was canoeing and campfires. The children built the fire, and the entire group sang and danced around it.

Hesron Sihombing, a first-year MATS student and pastor from Indonesia, said he learned to swim at camp. But that wasn't his highlight. Staying up playing cards and telling stories was. Sihombing was also able to participate in the Tortor Batak dance from his tribe.

He was also eager to learn how to set up the tents, and he and Latt agreed he was one of the only participants who had any camping experience. Although camping isn't familiar to most international students, Latt said the participants are ready to camp again, and are already looking toward next summer.

Sara Trumm, program coordinator for A Center of Christian, Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice, was on hand as another leader and driver, and led morning devotions. The group included five first year students, and represented these countries: Nigeria, Indonesia, Korea, Tanzania, Turkey, Burma and India.

Building a fire and roasting marshmallows was a camp highlight.

Campers representing seven countries

Campers show off their dance moves.
New Books from Alumni

Any Body There?
As we watch people engage with their smartphones, oblivious to what is around them, we may wonder, any body there? It is also the question facing the church as it wrestles with declining religious affiliation. In his new book, Any Body There? Worship and Being Human in a Digital Age, Pastor Craig Mueller (1988, MDiv; 2013, DMin) considers this contemporary context, and offers a response based in an incarnational spirituality accentuating the body and finding expression in corporate, multisensory liturgy.


Living a Happier Life – At Every Age
Rev. Dr. John H. Krahn (1969, MDiv) has just had his eighth book, Living a Happier Life – At Every Age, published. In it, he shares numerous ways to increase joy and happiness in your life. Some of the 14 chapters include: Choose a Happier Life; God Made Me and God Doesn’t Make Junk; Eliminate Worry – The Joy Thief; Living Life at its Highest Level; and The Power of Impossibility.

It is now available from Amazon.com. Simply type “John Krahn” in the search engine.

Alumna’s book wins award for Christian non–fiction

Divine Plan Unfolding
Dr. Debela Birri traces the introduction and expansion of evangelical Christianity in western Ethiopia in Divine Plan Unfolding: The Story of Ethiopian Evangelical Church Bethel, using mission and ecclesiastical records, oral history and other writings. As a member of the Bethel Synods of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, Debela brings together his scholarship and a love for the church. This history also provides a perspective to balance the accounts of European and North American missionaries and historians.

Published by Lutheran University Press, Divine Plan Unfolding (ISBN: 978–1–9326–8894–8) is available directly from the publisher and online from other booksellers.

Next Generation Indie Book Awards is the largest not–for–profit awards program for indie authors and independent publishers.
Faculty

Javier “Jay” Alanis, executive director, associate academic dean and associate professor of theology, culture and mission, Lutheran Seminary Program of the Southwest, was a Bible study leader at the ELCA rostered leaders event in August. He also published “Pondering the word” in the July issue of Living Lutheran.


Carl E. Braaten, professor emeritus of systematic theology, published “Encomium for an Evangelical Catholic: Robert W. Jenson (1930–2017)” in The Institute on Religion and Public Life’s September 9 issue of the online journal, First Things.


Kurt K. Hendel, Bernard, Fischer, Westberg Distinguished Ministry Professor Emeritus of Reformation History, is quoted in the October 5 Religion News Service article “Here he stood: Lutheran pilgrims travel to Germany on Reformation anniversary,” about a trip that alumnus Patrick Shebeck’s congregation, St. Paul–Reformation in Minneapolis, Minn., invited Hendel to lead earlier this year. Hendel gave an introduction to the Reformation(s) for a Lutheran–Catholic dialogue series held by Bethlehem Lutheran Church and St. Barnabas Catholic Church in Chicago in October. That month he also presented “Martin Luther: Man, Monk, Scholar, Transformer,” at Grace Lutheran Church in Corvallis, Ore.

Hendel was the keynote speaker at the University of Chicago’s Autumn Symposium held at LSTC, Martin Luther and the 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.


Edgar Krentz, Christ Seminary–Seminex Professor Emeritus of New Testament, taught a six-week class on the book of Hebrews at Montgomery Place in Chicago in September and October. He also presented lectures on 16th century German art, and Bach’s Cantata on “Ein Feste Burg” and Mendelssohn’s Reformation Symphony in October.

Richard Perry Jr., professor of church and society and urban ministry, was one of the featured theologians in the documentary Martin Luther: The idea that Changed the World, created for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and broadcast nationally on public television stations.

Barbara Rossing, professor of New Testament, in June, was on a panel at a Climate Training at Union Seminary in New York, where she had a chance to discuss climate change with Al Gore. In August, she presented her work on “Tree of Life for the Healing of the World: Abundant Life, the Bible, and Hope,” at the Enhancing Life Capstone Conference, held at the University of Chicago. The Enhancing Life blog includes September 26 and October 3 posts about her project. Find it at enhancinglife.uchicago.edu/blog.

In September, Rossing was the keynote speaker at the Presbyterians for Earth Care conference “Blessing the Waters of Life: Justice and Healing for Our Watersheds” in Oregon. In October, she was a featured speaker at “One Vine, One Body,” a Reformation event held at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church in Wenatchee, Wash. Rossing was featured in the October 2 Wenatchee World story “Art of Community: The lasting impact of Holden Village on our communities.”

Lea Schweitz, associate professor of systematic theology/religion and science and director of the Zygon Center for Religion and Science, in August presented her work on “Enhancing Life in the City: Urban Nature,” at the Enhancing Life Capstone Conference held at the University of Chicago. In October, she presented a paper at the 180th meeting of the American Theological
Society, Midwest, in Chicago.

She published “Reforming Our Visions of City Nature” in The Cresset 80, no. 4 (Easter, 2017).

Benjamin Stewart, Gordon A. Braatz Associate Professor of Worship and director of Advanced Studies, was quoted in the Deseret News article, “The tough compromise families make after the loss of a loved one,” that appeared in the Bloomington, Ind., Herald Times Online on September 22.


Christine Wenderoth, director, JKM Library, and associate professor of ministry, presented “Reimagining the Theological Library,” at the American Theological Library Association Annual Conference in June. At the conference she also participated on the panel “Theological Schools in Times of Crisis, Change and Opportunity: Libraries as Passive Partners or Change Agents?”

Vitor Westhelle, professor of systematic theology, participated in the XVI Congress for European Theology in Vienna, Austria, in September where he presented in the lecture “Global Challenges to Western Academic Theology: On Subverting the Master’s Tools.” He is one of the featured theologians in the documentary Martin Luther: The Idea that Changed the World, created for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and broadcast nationally on public television stations in September. In August, he was one of the presenters at the Association of Teaching Theologians conference held at LSTC.


Building and preserving community motivated alum’s award-winning work

Robert Langseth’s tireless work to turn an abandoned church in Calumet, Mich., into the Keweenaw Heritage Center led the Historical Society of Michigan to present him with the 2017 Charles Follo Award in June. The award was presented during the society’s Upper Peninsula History Conference in Iron River, Mich.

A 1958 graduate of Augustana Theological Seminary, Langseth moved to Michigan’s Copper Country in 1964, as pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Calumet. In an August 1 article about him in the Mining Gazette, he says that what compelled him to get involved in the community was the Bible verse Jeremiah 29:7, “But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”

He stayed involved in the community into retirement, chairing a community coalition to petition the U.S. Congress to recognize the national contribution the peninsula made in developing America. He testified before Congress four times before the establishment of the Keweenaw National Historical Park was signed into law in 1992.

Langseth is one of seven members appointed by the Secretary of the Interior to the Advisory Committee which partners with the park in extending the benefits of their natural and cultural resource conservation and development efforts throughout the 800,000 non–federal acres of the Keweenaw.

Of the award, he said, “God is still using this 1958 Augustana grad in surprising ways.”
Robert Langseth (MDiv) received the 2017 Charles Follow Award given by the Historical Society of Michigan on June 24. See previous page for more details.

William Lesher (Chicago Lutheran Seminary, 1958, MDiv) and his wife, A. Jean Lesher were the honorees at a reception given on August 13 by the Southern California Parliament of the World’s Religions, the Inland Valley Interfaith Network and the Religions Committee of their retirement community, Pilgrim Place, for their “dedicated interfaith engagement” and on the occasion of their 60th wedding anniversary. Bill was the chair of the board for two modern Parliaments in 1999 (Cape Town) and 2004 (Barcelona).

Krysten Winter-Green (ThM) a member of the Pontifical Commission on the Protection of Minors spoke about the work of the Commission in the article “Papal abuse commissions considers restructuring, survivors may lose direct role” which appeared in the Aug. 23, 2017 edition of National Catholic Reporter.

Kathryn Kleinhans (Christ Seminary–Seminex, MDiv) published “Thy kingdom come” in the August Living Lutheran. She is also quoted I the article “Liberated by grace, encouraged by sisterhood,” in the October issue of Living Lutheran.

Don Dallmann (Christ Seminary–Seminex, MDiv) wrote a tribute to comedian and activist Dick Gregory in August 29 issue of the San Luis Obispo Tribune. He recalled Gregory’s use of humor to defuse tensions between demonstrators who had been arrested at a 1965 civil rights demonstration in Chicago. He said, “Dick Gregory was one of my heroes. His cool, calm and courageous comic relief...his willingness to sacrifice his time, energy and financial resources...to work with the local leadership made a powerful impression on me.”

Jennifer Simpson (Year, MA) began a five-year term as dean of the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Memorial University of Newfoundland on October 1. She served as chair of the Department of Drama and Speech Communications at Waterloo University prior to this appointment. Her scholarship has focused on the role higher education plays in public life and on race and colonialism in higher education.

Stacie Fidlar (MDiv) was named Citizen of the Year in Rock Island, Ill., where she has been pastor of St. John’s Lutheran Church for 18 years. She was honored for making Rock Island a better place through her wide-ranging involvement including service on hospital and foundation boards, her church’s support of a local job training program, her work with shelters for women and children in need, and an after-school program.

Mercedes Garcia Bachmann (ThM; 1999, PhD) preached on September 15 at the Buenos Aires Catholic Cathedral in Buenos Aires, Argentina, together with the Archbishop, as a part of a celebration of the Protestant Reformation.

Stefan Munker (MDiv) began a new call as pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Hillsboro, Ill., on June 4.


Viktoria Halmagyi Parvin (MDiv) is now pastor of St. Mark Lutheran Church in Charlottesville, Va. The local public radio station, WMRA, did a profile of her on July 19. Read or listen at http://wmra.org/post/new-pastor-charlottesville-born-under-communism#stream/0.


Steve Jerbi (MDiv) was featured in the August 6 Milwaukee Journal Sentinel article, “After 10 years in Milwaukee fighting for social justice, the Rev. Steve Jerbi says goodbye to All Peoples Church.” He has begun a new call as pastor of Bethel Encino in Los Angeles, Calif.

Meghan Johnston Aelabouni (MDiv) published “Freed in Christ to serve the neighbor” in the October issue of Living Lutheran.


Amy Kienzle (MDiv) was the subject of a June 30 Article in the Brooklyn Daily that features “Women of Distinction.” She is the mission development pastor of the Park Church Co-op in the Greenpoint neighborhood. Under her leadership, Park Church Co-op has hosted farmer’s markets, concerts, dance parties and open meetings for the community as well as providing temporary shelter for the homeless during the winter.

Patrick Shebeck (MDiv) was quoted in a Religion News Service article, “Here he stood: Lutheran pilgrims travel to Germany on Reformation anniversary,” about a trip his congregation, St. Paul–Reformation in Minneapolis, Minn., sponsored earlier this year.

Tim Brown (MDiv) published
“Pastoring the Purple” in the April issue of *Living Lutheran*.

Meagan Sherman-Sporrong (MDiv) started a new call as pastor of Acacia Park Lutheran Church in Norridge, Ill., on September 10. Earlier this year she earned a master of arts in counseling psychology from North Park University.

**2010**

Aaron Decker (MDiv) was featured in a July 23 article in the *Boston Telegram*, “Decker trading pulpit for lectern.” He is now in the master of divinity in academics degree program at Princeton Theological Seminary. He is concentrating on Old Testament studies with the hope of teaching at a college or seminary. He has been serving two parishes, Christ Lutheran in West Boylston, Mass., and Immanuel Lutheran Church in Holden, Mass. He left Christ Lutheran to pursue his studies.

**2012**

Ayalew Mengesha (ThM) successfully defended his dissertation for his doctor of philosophy degree from LSTC. He returned to Ethiopia on August 31. He plans to return to Chicago to take part in the 2018 commencement ceremony.

**2013**

Carmen Retzlaff (MDiv) spoke at the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly in May as her congregation, New Life Lutheran Church, Dripping Springs, Texas, was received into the synod and the ELCA.

**2014**

Bekki Lohrmann (MDiv) and her spouse, Marcus, have begun a new call as co-pastors of Fullness of God Lutheran Church at Holden Village, Chelan, Wash.

**2015**

Vicki Johnson (TEEM) was part of a select choir that accompanied renowned opera start Kathleen Battle in “The Underground Railroad: A Spiritual Journey” performed at the historic Auditorium Theater of Roosevelt University in Chicago on September 30. She had a solo part in the song, “Hold On.”

Kwame Pitts (MDiv) is the new campus pastor for Lutheran Campus Ministries for the University of Chicago and part of Augustana Lutheran Church.

**2016**

Amy (Loehndorf) Michelson (MDiv) was ordained September 30 at Peace Lutheran Church in Waunakee, Wis. She is now serving as associate pastor of Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cranberry Township, Pa.

**2017**

Megan Clausen (MDiv) was ordained September 1 at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Des Moines, Iowa. She is serving as pastor of First Evangelical Lutheran Church in York, Neb.

Anna Ernst (MDiv) was ordained September 23 at St. Luke Lutheran Church in Silver Spring, Md. She was installed as associate pastor of Epiphany Evangelical Lutheran Church in Elmhurst, Ill., on October 1.

Joy Heine (MDiv) was ordained September 9 at Bethel Lutheran Church in Gary, Ind., where she has been called to serve as pastor.

Katie Jacob (MDiv) was featured in the Aug. 25 article “Meet Holy Trinity’s new pastor” in IndeOnline.com, a news service in Massillon, Ohio.

Elizabeth (Liz) Kocher (MDiv) was ordained August 12 at Rejoice! Lutheran Church in Omaha, Neb. She is serving as pastor of Triumphant Cross Lutheran Church in Dothan, Ala.

Marcus Lohrmann (Affiliate) was ordained on October 14 at Christ Lutheran Church in Walla Walla, Wash. He and spouse Bekki (2014, MDiv) are serving as co-pastors of Fullness of God Lutheran Church at Holden Village, Chelan, Wash.


**Future alumni**

**2018**

Kyle Siebert (MDiv) vicar at Zion Lutheran Church in Muscatine, Iowa, planned an ecumenical service to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. It was front page news in the *Voice of Muscatine* newspaper in August.
Robert Burton 1956–2017  
Class of 2006

Pastor Bob Burton was ordained in 2006 and served as Bethesda Lutheran Church in Morrison, Ill. until his death on September 28. He had worked as a sales representative for Pioneer–Hi–Bred for 28 years before discerning a call to ordained ministry.

A funeral service was held on October 2 at Bethesda Lutheran Church. He is survived by his wife, Anita, their three children and their spouses, and seven grandchildren.

Judith Ann Crowley 1956–2017  
Class of 19

Pastor Judith Crowley served congregations in Milwaukee and Pewaukee, Wis. She also served as the Lutheran chaplain at Marquette University. In addition to her pastoral care, Crowley was a registered nurse and worked at several different hospitals. She was a facilitator for healing Hearts of Waukesha County (Wis.).

She died on June 18. A memorial service was held on July 7 at St. Luke’s Lutheran Church in Waukesha. She is survived by her children, Erin and Sean, and their father, Timothy Crowley.

Maggie Lux Cumings 1979–2017  
Class of 2009

Pastor Maggie (Lux) Cumings served two parishes in Minnesota after her ordination in 2009: a two-point parish, First Lutheran in Cosmos and Beckville Lutheran Church, and then at First Lutheran in St. James. She served in the Lutheran Volunteer Corps and at several parishes before entering seminary. She is remembered as effervescent, witty, comfortable and cheerful by the communities she served. She was part of the Friends of the Library, community theater productions, and the work of the synod.

She died on September 28 at St. Mary’s Hospital in Rochester, Minn. A funeral service was held on October 5 at First Lutheran Church in St. James. She is survived by her husband, Michael, their two children, her mother, sister, in–laws and nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her father.

Arthur N. Forsberg 1928–2017  
Augustana Theological Seminary  
Class of 1957

Pastor Arthur N. Forsberg served in the U.S. Army Air Corps before attending college and seminary. He was ordained in 1957 and served as a pastor for 30 years in New Jersey.

He died on September 22 in Knoxville, Tenn. He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Jane, their son and daughter–in–law, five grandchildren and one great-grandchild. A memorial service was held September 30 at Faith Lutheran Church in Farragut, Tenn.

David Alan Kopplin 1932–2017  
Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary  
Class of 1957

After earning a master’s degree from LSTC, David Kopplin earned a master’s degree and PhD from Michigan State University and a master’s of public health from the University of Michigan. He served as a hospital chaplain and mission developer for the Westside Medical District in Chicago and then as a professor at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Dr. Kopplin spent the last 28 years of his career teaching in the Psychology Department at Baylor University. In 2009 he was presented with Baylor’s Herbert H. Reynolds Award for Exemplary Service. He served as a part–time psychologist at Injury 1 Treatment Center until shortly before his death.

He took great joy in his wife, Faith, and their family. He traveled extensively—to all 50 states in the US, to most Canadian provinces, to Europe, Scandinavia, Australia, and Tanzania. He died on September 1 and is survived by his wife, their three children and spouses, and seven grandchildren. A memorial service was held September 9 at Lake Shore Baptist Church in Waco, Texas.

Noel R. Kropp 1939–2017  
Class of 1969

Pastor Noel Kropp was ordained in 1969 and served parishes in Minnesota and Iowa before taking a call to serve as chaplain of Bethany Lutheran Home (location?). He served there from 1995 to 2014. He died of complications from cancer on September 8 at his home in Council Bluffs, Iowa. He was preceded in death by his wife, Joan, and an infant daughter. He is survived by two daughters and their spouses, one grandson and a brother.

Stephen L. Kurth 1941–2017  
Class of 1968

Pastor Kurth was ordained in 1968 and served parishes in Wauwatosa, Pownette, and Morrisonville, Wis. He was instrumental in building the Pioneer Place residences in Pownette. He died on March 22 at Luther Manor in Milwaukee. A memorial service was held at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Rio, Wis., on July 28. He is survived by a sister and brother–in–law.

George M. Meslow 1941–2017  
Class of 1967

See “We Remember” page 17
IN MEMORIAM

Warren A. Nelson
1927-2017
Augustana Lutheran Seminary
Class of 1963

Warren Nelson served in the United States Navy during World War II and the Korean Conflict. He served as an Air Force Chaplain in the Vietnam War and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel. He also served as pastor of several churches in California. He died on July 1. A memorial service was held at Hope Lutheran Church, Fresno, Calif., on August 5. He is survived by his wife, Sharon, their two sons and a granddaughter.

Richard W. Rieger
1931-2017
Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary
Class of 1957

After his ordination in 1957, Pastor Rieger served four parishes in upstate New York. In 1988 he was called as founding pastor of St. Andrew Lutheran Church in South Glen Falls, N.Y. He retired as pastor emeritus in 1993. In retirement he taught astronomy to children and adults. He also volunteered his skills as a Master Gardener for the Warren County Cooperative Extension. He died on July 9 in Glen Falls. A memorial service was held on July 29 at Messiah Lutheran Church, Schenectady, N.Y. He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Marian, their two children, two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Paul L. Rowoldt
1927-2017
Central Lutheran Seminary
Class of 1955

After serving in the U.S. Army during World War II, Paul Rowoldt entered the pre-seminary program at Midland Lutheran College in Fremont, Neb., and then attended Central Lutheran Theological Seminary. He was ordained in 1955 and served many churches throughout Kansas and Nebraska. He retired from active ministry in 1985 but continued to serve as a chaplain for the American Legion. He also served as a supply pastor to a number of churches and has a private counseling practice in Columbus, Neb., for 13 years. He died on September 5 at the Columbus Community Hospital. A funeral service was held on September 12 at Peace Lutheran Church in Columbus. He is survived by his wife, Janet, their five children and nine grandchildren.

Parichart Suwanbubbha
1958-2016
Classes of 1990 and 1994

Dr. Parichart Suwanbubbha was the first Buddhist to earn a PhD in Christian theology from LSTC. Her dissertation topic was “Grace and Karma: A Case Study of Religio–Cultural Encounters in Protestant and Buddhist Communities in Bangkok and its Relevant Environments, Thailand.” She was an expert in peace building and conflict resolution who conducted frequent dialogues between groups of military personnel, religious leaders and Buddhist and Muslim villagers in her home country of Thailand. She earned international respect as a Buddhist theologian with scholarship in Buddhist ethics, Christianity, interreligious dialogue, and ethical education. She was an assistant professor on the faculty of social sciences and humanities, Mahidol University, Salaya, Nakornpathom, Thailand, where she was an instructor in the graduate program on religion and development. She had been a director of the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies at Mahidol University and also served as a secretary of the Religions for Peace’s Inter-religious Council of Thailand. She served as a board member of Globalethics.net Foundation and was a member of the KAICIID Advisory Forum.

Dr. Suwanbubbha died on December 6 after a long battle with brain cancer. A memorial service was held from 7 to 13 December at the Makutkasatriyaram Temple in Bangkok.

Mark P. Wiberg
1936-2017
Augustana Theological Seminary
Class of 1962

See “We Remember” page 17
Welcome

In June, Taposhi Bentley joined the Finance Office as acting controller. An employee of the Quatrro management firm, Taposhi has experience serving as controller for several Chicago area non-profit organizations. She is a certified public accountant with a degree in accounting from Ohio State University.

Abimbola "Abbie" Brown began in the new position of operations assistant on August 23. She assists the vice president of operations and the directors of building services, resources and housing, and information technology.

Abimbola came to Chicago from Atlanta, Ga., in 2013 to do graduate work at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where she received a master's in education. She brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to her new role. She has taught English in Japan and taught third grade in the Chicago Public Schools. She served as a human resources assistant for Home Depot, was a meeting planner at the Medical Association of Georgia, and an account manager at Bank of America. In the Yoruba language of Nigeria, Abimbola means "born with wealth."

Katie M. Deaver joined the Admissions Office as Associate Director of Admissions. See more on page 2.

Transitions

On July 1, the following people made changes to their title or employment at LSTC:

- Patricia Bartley is now the director of enrollment management and registrar
- Aaron Copley-Spivey is now the director of human resources and housing
- Ryan Fordice is now the full-time campaign and engagement manager
- Julie Sevig is now full-time as communications specialist—advancement

Accomplishments


Erik Christensen, pastor to the community and director of worship, wrote introductions to Christmas and Time after Epiphany, Sundays and Seasons (Year B, 2018) (Augsburg Fortress).

Irene Connor, who had served in several different roles at LSTC for over 20 years, died on September 6 in Chicago. A funeral mass was held on September 16 at St. Ailbe Catholic Church, where she was an active member and volunteer.

Irene was born in Chicago in 1935 and was raised in the Bronzeville neighborhood. She and her husband, Thomas Lockhart Lewis, married in 1951 and had six children. Irene was one of the first African American bookkeepers to work at the Zenith Radio Corporation. She went on to work for a number of different agencies in Chicago to support her children when she was left a young widow. Through sacrifice and hard work, she sent her children to private secondary and post-secondary schools. She retired from LSTC in 2009.

In addition to her active faith, Irene was active politically from a young age. Her mother was a Democratic precinct captain who managed to navigate and steer clear of Chicago’s murky politics. Irene became involved in Jesse Jackson’s Operation Breadbasket and the civil rights movement. She stayed informed and passionate about politics her entire life.

At St. Ailbe, she taught adult catechism classes, assisted in counseling abused women and children, sometimes preached, and was one of the leaders of the congregation.

Irene died peacefully at home, surrounded by her children. She is survived by five of them, Brenda, Michele, Verna, Thomas Jr., and Glover; seven grandchildren, twelve great grandchildren, and three great-great grandchildren.

WE REMEMBER

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Pam Johnson Davis, Advanced Studies coordinator and international student administrator, exemplified the spirit of Welcome Week at LSTC.

PhD students Smitha Das Gunthoi and Manoj Kumar Gunthoi with their three sons Andry, Alfy, and Abdi, during Welcome Week.

Patricia Cuyatti Chavez (2007, ThM; 2010, PhD) delivered the 2017 Scherer Lecture.

Klaus-Peter Adam, associate professor of Old Testament, gives a brief orientation before a bike tour of Bronzeville.

Pam Johnson Davis, Advanced Studies coordinator and international student administrator, exemplified the spirit of Welcome Week at LSTC.

Dogs Roscoe and Ginger patiently wait during the Blessing of the Animal Service.

PhD students Smitha Das Gunthoi and Manoj Kumar Gunthoi with their three sons Andry, Alfy, and Abdi, during Welcome Week.
Celebrate 30 years with the LSTC Gospel Choir

For 30 years, the LSTC Gospel Choir has inspired the seminary community during worship. It has also brought the gospel message in song to area congregations and to siblings in Christ in Tanzania and South Africa. Best of all, it has hosted annual Gospel Concerts featuring choirs, musicians and dancers from the Chicago area and beyond as a fundraiser to support the Grover Wright and Rev. Carole A. Burns Scholarship Funds.

“Stay Connected!” the 30th Anniversary LSTC Gospel Concert will be held Sunday, April 8 at 4 p.m. in the Augustana Chapel at LSTC. Former Gospel Choir members are invited to join a Reunion Choir. For more information, contact Gospel Choir Manager Pastor Vickie Johnson at vdjohn@aol.com or 773.704.7216.

All are invited to contribute to the Grover Wright and Rev. Carole A. Burns Scholarship Funds for this special anniversary year. Click the “Give” button at the top of any page at lstc.edu and designate the gift as “Other” and note the fund in the comment box.

LSTC’s Gospel Choir was founded in 1987 by Patricia Bartley to bring students and staff together to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in song during a worship service in 1988. Afterwards, Bartley made an open invitation to anyone in the seminary community to join the fellowship and fun. The rest is history.

The choir has sung for churches of all denominations in Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, and Wisconsin. It has participated in services for the Hyde Park Interfaith Community, synods, city festivals and opened the City of Chicago’s Gospel Music Fest on the Main Stage in Grant Park in 2003.

It has provided dozens of scholarships for LSTC students of color or whose first language is other than English.

OTHER EVENTS AT LSTC

Manz Organ Series
The first Tuesday of each month, organists from the Chicago area perform a 30-minute recital on the Ruth and Paul Manz Organ in the Augustana Chapel at LSTC. This free public event begins at 12:15 p.m.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day at LSTC
Join the LSTC community on Monday, January 15 at 11 a.m. for a special service to honor the life and ministry of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Spring Seminary Sampler
Encourage those you know who are discerning a call to ministry to attend LSTC’s Seminary Sampler February 24-26. Prospective students can sit in on classes, meet with faculty, students, staff and one another. Housing and meals are provided and some travel stipends are available. Register online at lstc.edu/admissions/visit, email admissions@lstc.edu or call 773.256.0727.

World Mission Institute
Dr. Anthony J. Gittins, professor emeritus of theology and culture at Catholic Theological Union, and Dr. Jennifer McBride, associate dean of the Doctor of Ministry Programs at McCormick Theological Seminary, explore the topic “What on Earth Is Discipleship? A Disturbing Question” at the World Mission Institute on April 12 at 6 p.m. at LSTC.
James Nieman and the LSTC community greet LSTC’s new Pastor to the Community and Director of Worship Erik Christensen after his installation.