



Κηρυξάτε PREACH THE GOSPEL

A MAGAZINE OF WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY



A TIME
TO BUILD



2026–27 EVENTS

AUGUST 19	Opening Service
SEPTEMBER 21	WLS Alumni Annual Meeting
SEPTEMBER 21–22	WLS Symposium
OCTOBER 10	Friends of the Seminary Day
DECEMBER 13	Christmas Concert
JANUARY 11–22	Winterim
FEBRUARY 2–4	Mission and Ministry
MAY 27	Call Day and Graduation Concert
MAY 28	Graduation



EDITOR'S NOTE

New construction is taking place on the campus of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. This issue's theme, therefore, is "A Time to Build." Articles describe not only the new building project, but also the numerous ways that seminary students, faculty, and staff strive, by God's grace, to build up one another and to build God's kingdom.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- † Thank you to the authors who contributed to this issue.
- † Special thanks to Barbara Rickaby, the seminary's communications coordinator and photographer.

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A Time to Build

“IT’S TIME.”

Not long after Johannes Bading was called to serve as synod president in 1860, he began to speak of the importance of establishing a confessional Lutheran seminary. Relying on the European mission societies to provide the necessary faithful Lutheran pastors was not a workable solution in the long term. The Wisconsin Synod needed a more reliable source of gospel servants. Though the synod wasn’t exactly swimming in money in 1862, President Bading contended the time had come. God’s people agreed. Trusting the Lord to bless, the synod began operating a seminary in Watertown, Wisconsin, in 1863 with one student. Two years later, when the school that ultimately came to be known as Northwestern College was constructed, seminary classes were taught on that campus.

After operating the seminary in various places in the 1870s and 1880s, the synod decided that they needed to do something better. It was time to build a stand-alone seminary. Increased enrollment was a factor. All involved wanted to support the men preparing for service in Christ’s church and to give them the best training possible. Construction began in 1892 and the new seminary, located in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, was dedicated to the glory of God in 1893.

A little more than twenty-five years later, however, most agreed they needed to do better. It was time to find a new location for the seminary. Not only did the building in Wauwatosa need significant repairs and expansion, but there was also precious little space on campus for recreation and no room at all to build homes for professors. In addition, the synod did not own the land on which the seminary was built. Two properties were purchased and sold in the 1920s before ultimately deciding on a third property, a nearly eighty-acre farm in Thiensville (now Mequon), Wisconsin, as the best option for a new seminary.

Those involved in the process were committed to constructing a building that would last, so that the synod could have a settled place for its pastor-training institution. Above all, they were committed to doing their very best for the Lord who loved them and purchased them with his blood. They aspired to provide a beautiful campus for the students and first-rate facilities to promote excellent training for pastoral ministry.

Our forebears succeeded. The Mequon campus has served the synod well for nearly one hundred years. Almost 3,300 men have completed their preparation for pastoral ministry on the campus. The place is as beautiful as ever. More than one person has described it as living and studying in a park—a wonderful environment for students and professors alike.



As spectacular as the campus is and as well as the building constructed in 1929 has served our church body, it’s time to build. We can do better for the men preparing to serve as pastors in Christ’s church.

IT’S TIME TO BUILD NEW CLASSROOMS

A few of the current classrooms are in the basement. They do not have the natural light that supports student learning. The basement classrooms often smell like a Wisconsin basement, with a mustiness that is occasionally overpowering. When heavy rains come, some of the basement classrooms take on water, and the mustiness increases. That’s hardly an ideal environment for learning.

The current classrooms served well in a previous generation, when most of the classes were lecture-based. Students sat in individual desks and faced the front of the classroom, ready to receive instruction. The professors presented material, wrote important things on the chalkboard (or overhead or whiteboard), and the students dutifully took notes and asked clarifying questions. Space to move around wasn’t needed, because the only movement was students coming into class at the beginning of the hour and leaving at the end.

The current classrooms don’t work as well for the collaborative learning common today, where students engage in small-group discussion based on material shared with them. Larger classrooms would allow tables to be set up in pods, facilitating those important discussions. The more opportunities students have to express the truths of Scripture and apply them to a situation, the better equipped they will be as pastors to speak God’s Word clearly and faithfully to the people the Lord calls them to serve. Small-group conversations give every student a chance to participate. Those who might rarely volunteer thoughts in a large group more readily engage in the smaller group.

When the seminary was built in 1929, no one was thinking about students having laptops on their desk and needing access to electricity. At present, cords are seemingly everywhere on the floor in the classrooms. The students and professors who consider themselves agile appreciate the chance to demonstrate their ability to navigate the makeshift obstacle course. Others fear that they will trip over cords, causing computers to fall or coffee mugs to crash to the floor. Add in the backpacks and books stored on the floor and professors are hesitant to walk around the room to try to listen in on small-group discussions.

The new education center will have six classrooms, all with ample natural light. The two classrooms on the first floor will be significantly larger than any of the current classrooms, easily able to accommodate 45 students. Generally, courses are taught in smaller sections, but that's in part because classroom space didn't allow consideration of a different approach. The four classrooms on the second floor will be larger than most of the current classrooms and will allow for tables to be set up in pods or rows, depending on the course and the instructor's preference. Outlets will be available beneath tables to address the concern with electrical cords.

The new education center will also address a need identified in the strategic planning process: small-group meeting space. Currently, there are no obvious places for a group of four to six students to collaborate on a project or to meet with a professor, for instance, to work on a text study in preparation for writing a sermon. The new education center includes five study alcoves to support that kind of group learning.



IT'S TIME TO BUILD A STUDENT LOUNGE

One of the blessings we experienced during the 2020–21 school year when COVID protocols required the moving of morning worship from the chapel to the auditorium was the time both before and after the service for informal conversation, whether between students or between students and faculty.

The building project promises to provide a natural place for that. The project calls for transforming a portion of the current library into a comfortable student lounge, complete with a fireplace and a coffee bar. That area will serve as the pass-through from the chapel to the new education center. Every day, immediately after morning chapel, students, faculty, and staff will spend time in that space interacting with one another and developing relationships. Pastoral ministry is all about engaging people and forming relationships; this lounge area will provide a place to work on those skills.

IT'S TIME TO BUILD A GATHERING HALL

Seminary students have always appreciated the opportunity to strengthen the ties with their brothers in faith who will be their brothers in ministry. Those relationships develop in the classroom, in the dormitory, in the dining hall, and in regular get-togethers held in the dormitory basement. While quaint and workable, the basement is more than a bit cramped. It may work for seminary students, but it's not particularly inviting for the students' wives, who have no other place on campus to meet. A century ago, when the seminary was built, students were not allowed to be married. Now about half of the students are married.

A new spacious gathering hall attached to the current auditorium will provide a much more natural place for wives (and their children) to get together. With high



A Time to Build

IT'S TIME TO INVEST

The total cost of the project, including the furniture, fixtures, and equipment, is approximately \$15.6 million. That's not a trifling amount. Call it a significant investment in the gospel ministry. We're following in the footsteps of the saints who went before us, who were committed to building something that would be a blessing well into the future.

Christ's self-giving love compels us to give the Lord our best as we seek to support the spread of the life-giving gospel throughout the world. Christ's astounding love compels us to do our best for the men who want to be trained well for pastoral ministry, that they might be the best instruments they can be in the Lord's hand.

As we, as a synod, make this important investment in gospel ministry, we are making a statement to the young people of our church body. We are testifying both to our love for the public ministry of the gospel and to our commitment to prepare pastors who are well-equipped for ministry in the twenty-first century.

To this point the saints have offered gifts and commitments over \$8 million. The seminary's governing board has authorized the use of up to \$3 million of seminary funds on the project but would love to be able to use those dollars on other needed projects, like air conditioning in the dormitory, for instance. We are praying that God's people will consider it a privilege to participate in this project and thus assist in the preparation of pastors who will preach and teach God's saving truths in places they may never see. For more information, contact Sean Young, director of mission advancement, at sean.young@wls.edu or 262-242-8179.

ceilings, comfortable seating, and lots of natural light, the gathering hall will be a great area for student wives to spend time with one another. They will never have to feel that they are intruding on the dormitory students' home. That will be a blessing in several ways. As wives develop relationships with one another, they will be able to support each other in the busy years of seminary life. The more supported they feel, the more they will be able to support their husbands and encourage them to continue on the path to ministry. Relationships developed while at the seminary will also be a natural source of support when they are serving as pastors' wives in the future.

IT'S TIME TO BUILD ON-SITE OFFICES FOR PROFESSORS

All the men serving on the seminary faculty have served as pastors in congregations and mission fields across the synod. They are pastors by training and pastors at heart. They desire to model ministry for students and "pastor" them on the way to full-time service in the church. That requires regularly interacting with students both formally and informally, in the classroom and outside of it. On-site offices will foster that kind of mentoring and modeling. Professors won't have to go looking for spaces to meet privately with students; they will have offices available to them. Students, who are more eager than previous generations to have relationships with their professors and to be actively mentored for ministry, will know where to find faculty members for private conversation. The time that students and professors spend together will have an impact far beyond the walls of the seminary, as men leave the campus ready to serve God's people.

On-site offices will also facilitate collaboration among professors. They will be more readily available for conversation with their colleagues both during the class day and in the afternoons. That collaboration will increase their understanding of God's Word, stimulate them to an even deeper study of Scripture, and enhance their classroom instruction. The time professors spend in regular discussion with brothers on the faculty will nurture an even greater appreciation for the privilege of working together to form pastors for Christ's flock. Once the education center has been completed, the classrooms on the main floor and the second floor of the main building will be converted into on-site offices.

Construction began immediately after the school year concluded. If all goes according to plan, the education center, gathering hall, and student lounge will be completed in April 2027. The faculty offices will be completed by August 2027.

It's time to build, for the glory of God, the benefit of the students, and the blessing of those the students will one day serve as pastors. †

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

A Time to Worship



It is 9:20 a.m. on a typical Monday morning at the seminary: time for morning chapel. The students, faculty, staff, and some visiting guests have entered the chapel, walked past the trickling water of the baptismal font, and found their seats. A seminary professor is seated behind the ambo. A seminary student is seated at the organ bench introducing the opening hymn. It is a time to build up the faith of all present. It is a time to build up the skills required to serve as a leader in worship. It is a time for the body of Christ to be built up as those present hear God's Word and sing God's praises together.

At this chapel service, an opening hymn is sung, with the powerful voices resonating throughout the chapel. The invocation and Scripture reading follow. Then the speaker delivers his devotion. When the devotion concludes, another hymn is sung. A closing prayer and the Aaronic blessing bring the chapel service to a close. It lasts only fifteen to twenty minutes, a brief but integral part of the morning routine.

So much goes into each chapel service. A group of seven seminary seniors serve on the worship committee under the direction of Dean of Chapel Aaron Christie. This committee plans the readings and hymns for each week based on the lectionary of the church year. In a typical week, a seminary professor leads chapel on Monday morning. He preaches on the Gospel from the previous Sunday, which sets the tone for the week's devotions. For the rest of the week, students lead chapel and are assigned readings from the weekly lectionary to use as the basis for their devotions. As a student composes his devotion, his faculty advisor provided feedback. Leading chapel is one of many opportunities for students to build their preaching skills during their time at the seminary.

Each day, musicians among the seminary students and professors take turns providing organ or piano accompa-

niment. Occasionally, other musical ensembles, including brass, strings, and percussion, participate. Each school year, a second-year seminary student is appointed to serve as the campus "sacristan." He is responsible for updating the hymn boards, scheduling chapel preachers, and maintaining the appearance of the chapel. Additionally, a student or staff member runs the audio-visual booth, ensuring proper sound and lighting and enabling chapel services to be livestreamed.

Quite often there are special chapel services at the seminary. On Friday mornings, the daily chapel service is usually expanded to incorporate a liturgical setting from *Christian Worship*. Festivals of the church year, both major and minor, are sometimes celebrated, especially if they occur on a school day. Evening chapel services are often held on Wednesday evenings at 8:00 p.m. (except during the seasons of Advent and Lent when all are encouraged to worship with a local congregation). These evening services are led by student and faculty volunteers.

So many people put so much effort into the various chapel services that take place at the seminary. At the center of all this effort, though, stands not our work, but Christ's. Prominently displayed in the seminary chapel is a crucifix depicting Christ on the cross. My eyes are often drawn to it when I am in the chapel. My heart and mind are so often directed to Christ on the cross during the chapel services that take place at the seminary. As hearts and minds are directed to Christ, faith is built up. "Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness" (Colossians 2:6-7).

You are welcome to join the seminary for chapel, held Monday-Friday at 9:20 a.m. when classes are in session, either in person or online at wls.edu, and to watch past chapel services at wls.edu/wls-chapel. †

Noah Melso is a 2026 graduate of the seminary.

Providing a Foundation of Support

The student whispers a quiet prayer as the final words of the hymn stanzas are sung. The music goes silent, and all eyes turn toward him. He has listened to numerous sermons, but this will be his first sermon as the preacher. His palms dampen with sweat, his heart pounds in nervousness, and deep down, he may worry, “What if this doesn’t go well? Will I be able to manage my nerves and handle the pressure of preaching?” What help is offered to the nervous preacher?

The student sighs as he looks at his lengthy to-do list and the fleeting time in his busy schedule. Each semester packs his mind, heart, and schedule full of gospel power and opportunities for growth. But the steady demands of full weeks and months can be mentally and emotionally taxing. The student may worry, “How am I going to make it through this? Will I get done what needs to be done?” What help is offered to the stressed student?

The student packs up his books and belongings for yet another move. In a few short years, he will arrive on campus, move away for vicar year, return for senior year, and then leave again as he reports to the place of his assignment. These aren’t the only changes he may undergo. He may have gotten married and welcomed a child or multiple children into the family. Throw in other unforeseen changes and challenges—a car accident, a medical issue, a death in the family—and the student may worry, “How am I going to handle the changes and challenges?” What help is offered to the weary seminarian?

The student hears the good news of forgiveness in Christ Jesus on a daily basis. He is reminded of its treasure as he translates verses and completes reading assignments for class. He hears of its impact while listening to devotions in the seminary chapel. But

sometimes a student may struggle to apply Jesus’ forgiveness to himself. After falling into that same sinful struggle or being reminded of something from his past, he may worry, “Will God forgive someone like me? Can God use someone like me in the pastoral ministry?” What help is offered to the conscience-stricken soul?

In each of these scenarios, the student can seek help from his seminary advisor. Each of the seminary’s pastor-professors is eager to care for, comfort, absolve, or counsel the stressed, weary, and conscience-stricken student. The advisor system is arranged so that not only can students seek out their pastor-professors, but also so that the pastor-professors will regularly seek out the students by checking on their spiritual, academic, and overall well-being.

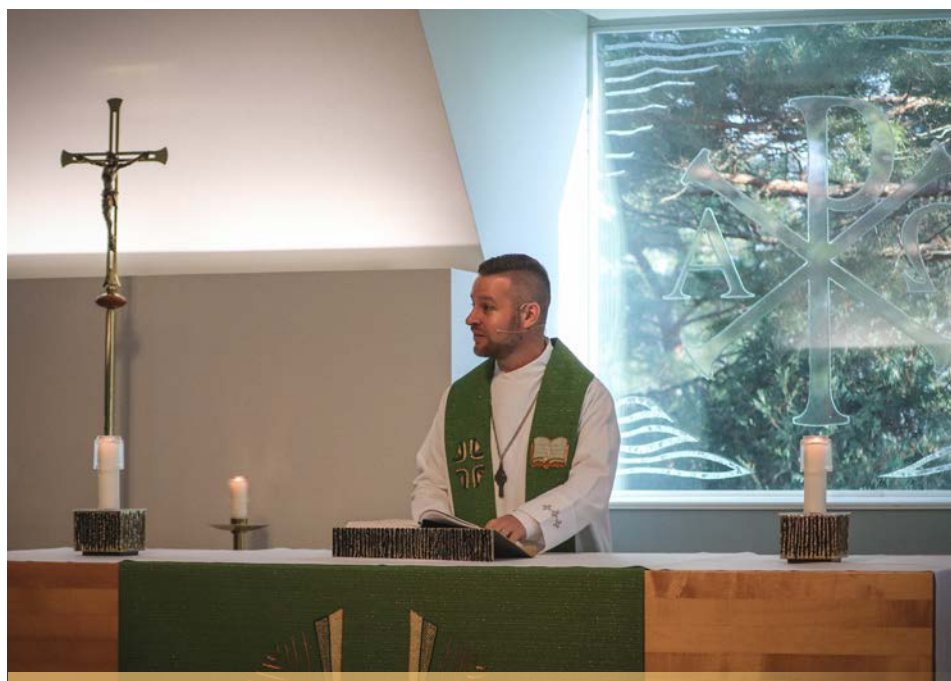
Another way that help is offered to students, and also to the students’ wives and their children, is through the work of the seminary’s campus counselor. I, the undersigned, currently serve in this way. I offer an open door and a calendar with numerous open times. Sometimes my work as the

campus counselor is “triaging” as I connect students or their family members to a professional counselor based on the needs of the situation. Other times, I myself will provide the ongoing pastoral counsel and care.

I also look for ways to encourage students in their overall well-being. This happens formally through presentations and by providing an annual marriage enrichment workshop. But this also happens informally through “check-ins” in the hallway and by offering encouragement in the practical theology classes. In all of these ways, the pastor-professors and campus counselor seek to provide a foundation of support for students so they can help and support others as future pastors. †

In addition to teaching pastoral counseling and systematic theology, Joel Russow serves as campus counselor. He holds master’s degrees in pastoral care (STM) and clinical mental health counseling (MA-CMHC).

He is currently pursuing a professional counseling license with the state of Wisconsin.



Building Leaders

Brick-and-mortar construction is always exciting. Families can't wait to move into their new homes, employees can't wait to move into their new offices, and seminarians can't wait to move into their new classrooms. At this moment in Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's (WLS) history, it is a "time to build." But hasn't that always been the case? The seminary's foundational work has always been about "building" (or to borrow a word from our mission statement, "forming") pastors.

When a student sets foot on this campus, he is immersed in a campus life that is formational. The classroom gets the majority of the focus, and rightly so. However, the seventh- and eighth-grade catechism class, the EFT (Early Field Training) that happens in local congregations, and the factory line also form the seminarian, shaping his experiences, habits, and work ethic. To grow the skills of a future pastor, our Lord also uses another experience that some of our readers might not expect at a seminary: student government.

Student government on the campus of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is an experience that shapes students into thoughtful, collaborative leaders. About twenty students are elected by their peers to serve as their representatives. These elections occur within each class, so each of the three on-campus classes is represented. You can imagine what a privilege it is to be elected to a position of leadership by your own class, a group that is full of soon-to-be pastor-leaders!

The representatives meet once a month, joined by Dean of Students Joel Otto. What do we talk about? Our group's purpose says it well: "The student government at WLS exists to fulfill Paul's exhortation to 'make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4:3) by 1) facilitating the enjoyment of student life, 2) acting as a self-governing disciplinary body, and 3) serving as a liaison between the students and the administration and faculty of WLS."

Facilitating the enjoyment of student life. A central focus of our group is cultivating a healthy campus

culture. At WLS, we want everyone to feel like they belong. The relationships we build at the seminary will play an important role in our lives well beyond our years on this campus. In the ministry, no man is on an island caring for God's flock alone, so we don't want anyone to feel like they are walking through their seminary years alone either. Therefore, a key function of our group is to organize events for the student body and the larger campus family.

Acting as a self-governing disciplinary body. Our student body is full of sinner-saints. That means that, by God's grace, so much good happens on this campus. That doesn't mean, however, that student life is perfect. Throughout this school year, it has been nothing short of beautiful to watch fellow representatives apply law and gospel. Are the conversations sometimes uncomfortable? Of course. But God calls us to point out sin so that the devil might not gain a hold on our hearts and so the reality of forgiveness might shine brightly.

Serving as a liaison between the students and the administration and faculty of WLS. The faculty and administration are continually seeking ways to improve the entire seminary experience, and the student government is one of their key feedback channels. Students are encouraged to bring comments and concerns to their class representatives, who raise them in our meetings. Dean Otto then carries those conversations to the faculty and administration and brings their thoughts back to us. It's a two-way street that keeps the campus family connected.

Organizing, collaborating, and speaking the truth in love—there's no doubt that the skills gained while serving in student government at WLS will be useful for public ministry. But perhaps what is most formational is simply this: learning how to care for a community. That's what pastors do. And by God's grace, the seminary is building men who are ready to do just that. †



Joey Behm, who served as the student body president during the 2025–2026 academic year, is a 2026 graduate of the seminary.

Building the Pastoral Home

Justin and I welcomed our daughter, Elaine, two weeks prior to returning to Mequon for his senior year at the seminary. We packed up our house and moved as a family of three from Mount Horeb, Wisconsin, where Justin served as a vicar at Good News Lutheran Church. Immediately when we moved in, our next adventure as a seminary family had begun!

Life at the seminary is busy. Each day, Justin is gone from seven until about six. He spends half that time in class and the other half at his part-time job in a concrete light pole factory. This job is hard work, and his full schedule is tiring! We are very thankful for this job because it allows me to stay home with Elaine. Staying home and watching Elaine grow has been a blessing, but sometimes these days can get long and lonely, especially in the cold winter months.

Usually, when Justin gets home, we share a quick meal. The time we spend as a family at dinner is special, as it is the best and most intentional time Justin is able to spend with Elaine before it's time for her to go to bed. The work doesn't stop for him when he gets home. As soon as dinner ends, he goes right back to studying. Another challenge in addition to the packed schedule is the lack of sleep—midnight crying and diaper changes make restful nights rare.

Although family life at the seminary brings unique challenges, it brings far greater blessings. There is a married student food pantry, where people from around the synod donate food and household products. This pantry provides our family with household and kitchen staples that help us save money while Justin continues his education. Throughout



the year, we receive various gifts through generous supporters of the seminary. We are blessed beyond expectations by people from all over who want to support families like us.

The beauty of the seminary is how many families are in a similar situation to ours. I have been able to find a community as a wife and a mom. The seminary wives host a couple events each month. These events create relationships with other wives so that we can share in the future joys of ministry and lean on each other during the difficult times. There are also several mom groups that meet. These provide a great time to connect with each other, let the kids socialize, and break up the day-to-day routines that can get monotonous.

Of all the blessings the seminary

provides, the most important is the spiritual aspect. It provides daily and weekly opportunities to worship together as a family. The seminary hosts marriage workshops and Bible classes and encourages spiritual growth as a family. We are surrounded by like-minded Christians that are committing their lives to the gospel. As a wife and mom, I get a first-hand account of how God works through people, places, and his Word to spread the gospel in every season of life.

Though our life at the seminary is busy and sometimes challenging, we are thankful for the way God provides for our family while we anticipate our lives of service. He has truly blessed our family beyond our wildest expectations, and the seminary has been a large part of that. †

Alyssa Schroeder is the wife of Justin Schroeder, a 2026 graduate of the seminary.

Built to Last

The seminary library's rare book collection, one of its most treasured resources, will soon benefit from an upgrade as part of renovations associated with the seminary's building project.

In addition to many early Lutheran hymnals and German Bibles, the collection includes first or early editions of such works as Melancthon's *Body of Christian Doctrine*, Chemnitz's *Examination of the Council of Trent*, the 1580 *Book of Concord*, and the systematic theologies of the early Lutheran theologians Johann Gerhard, Abraham Calov, and Johann Quenstedt. The oldest book in the library's collection is a 1487 printing of the commentary on Isaiah by Nicholas de Lyra (d. 1340). In this volume, the text of the Latin Vulgate is printed in a two-column central block, surrounded by a two-column block of commentary, also in Latin; the initial letter of each sentence is rubricated by hand in either red or blue ink. The seminary's holdings of this book and other early titles are included in international catalogs such as the Incunabula Short Title Catalogue database of fifteenth-century works and the VD 16 database of sixteenth-century works published in German-speaking lands.

In the 2021–2022 school year, library staff undertook a project to study the thirty oldest books in the library's collection (all pre-1540) and determine how rare they truly were. Through online catalog listings, the study investigated how many known copies of each title were extant around the world and whether each title had been digitized. As a result, the study determined that several titles held at the seminary library are truly rare, including the only extant intact copy of a 1529 *Practica Teutsch* (the *Old Farmer's Almanac* of its day) by Anton Brelochs.

The existence of this title was previously unknown in catalogs of sixteenth-century *Practica* but is now listed; the seminary library has also uploaded a digitized copy to the Internet Archive online library. As another example of truly rare books, the seminary library recently received the donation of a 1678 Latin-German Luther's Catechism. Cataloging revealed that this book is the only extant example of a previously unknown first edition of this two-language version of the catechism.

Digitization of these and other resources is done with a professional book scanner purchased by the library in 2022 through the help of generous donations. Unlike consumer phone cameras, which rely heavily on computational processing and variable lighting conditions, the library's book-scanning camera produces archival-quality images at a true optical resolution of 400 dots per inch and is capable of scanning books of varying sizes and thicknesses at a speed of three seconds per page. Library staff continue to



digitize rare books that have not yet been scanned, often in response to patron requests.

The upcoming renovation of the library will result in a brand-new space for the rare book collection. The current rare book room in the lower level of the library will be turned into shelving space for books and periodicals, as will the adjoining classroom, which will no longer be needed once the new academic building is built. A new rare book room will be built on the opposite side of the lower level of the library and will feature modern environmental controls, glass walls, a work area, and secure access during library hours for students and faculty. It is our hope that this renovation will ensure both the preservation and the active use of these materials for years to come. †

Nathan Ericson is director of the seminary library and professor of education.



Students hear about WELS mission work at Mission and Ministry each February



The Seminary Scurry each April is a fun run/walk for all ages



Friends of the Seminary Day brings WLS supporters to campus each October



The mission advancement team attended the WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership in January 2026



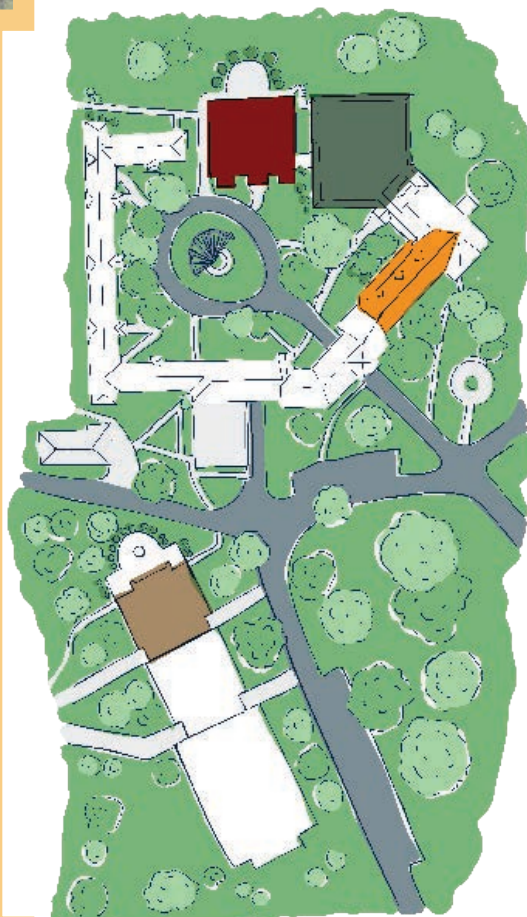
Pastors and seminary students meet and mingle at the annual Symposium



Student government representatives meet monthly in the Tower Room (see page 9)



Groundbreaking for the new buildings took place on May 20, 2026



Areas of construction and renovation (see pages 4–6)



Mission Advancement Director Sean Young and a faithful seminary supporter



The Seminary Chorus sings at numerous WELS churches each year

Education Built on God's Word

Construction of a new education center has begun. Where now there is a hole in the earth, God willing, a year from now will stand a building with six new classrooms and five spaces for small-group learning. Of course, more important than the building of those spaces is the building that will happen in them: the forming of pastoral hearts, minds, and skillsets in future gospel ministers.

FOUR BRANCHES AND SEVEN DEPARTMENTS

Visitors to our chapel notice the etched windows, two on each side of the altar. These four panes represent the four branches of theological study at our seminary:

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY is represented by a scroll with the words “Search the Scriptures” in Greek. This branch comes first because the others flow from it: inheritors of the Reformers’ *sola scriptura* know that everything starts with the Word. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) has two academic departments in this branch, Old Testament and New Testament. In these courses, seminarians study the Bible in its original Hebrew and Greek at both the overview (isagogical) and granular (exegetical) levels.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY is symbolized by the Latin word *loci*, which literally means “places.” It refers to the organization of biblical theology into topics of study. In this branch, and the department of the same name, are our dogmatics (doctrine) courses, in which our students learn what Lutherans teach and why we teach it and compare it to what others believe and teach.

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY, depicted by a cross and shepherd’s staff, is the branch in which students learn how to put biblical theology into pastoral practice. WLS has three departments in this branch. The education department equips our students to teach the Word in settings like catechism class, Bible studies, and membership courses. The worship department trains students for preaching (homiletics) and proclamation of the Word in Lutheran worship. The pastoral theology department equips seminarians to apply God’s Word in a variety of other situations, such as evangelism visits, cross-cultural settings, counseling, and major life events like weddings and funerals.



HISTORICAL THEOLOGY, signified by a church on a solid foundation, is the study of how biblical theology has preserved the church—and been preserved and proclaimed by her—from the age of the apostles to today. Courses in the church history department at WLS cover eras such as the early church fathers, the Reformation, the Lutheran Confessions, the arrival of Lutheranism in America, and Christianity today.

There is one course that does not fit into a single branch because it allows students to study a topic from any of the branches: the senior thesis. Seniors at the seminary research and write on a topic of their choosing, presenting their findings to the seminary family and publishing their theses online.

TWENTY HOURS A WEEK FOR THREE YEARS

Seminarians attend class on campus four hours a day, five days a week, for three years: around 1,860 total class periods. They spend at least that much time doing homework outside of class, too. While that seems like a lot, professors will tell you (and, hopefully, students will agree) that they wish they had even more time. One could never finish sounding the depths of the Scriptures, and endless are the angles from which to understand them, apply them, and see them at work. So, we must be good stewards with the time we have. The curriculum is our plan to do that.

The seminary’s curriculum has been remarkably consistent throughout the years, and for good reason. Christians have been training candidates for the ministry for 2,000 years, Lutherans for 500, and WELS Lutherans for 160+. We are thankful for the strong shoulders of the giants on which we stand.

At the same time, we recognize that professors and students change over the generations. So do the people in our congregations and communities, and the best methods for communicating with them. Therefore, ministry training will look different from one generation to the next.

The seminary has undergone occasional curriculum revisions over the years. Last year, as part of the accreditation process, we created a seven-year, repeating plan to assess every aspect of our work. The first target was the curriculum, and a yearlong review led to the proposal of some changes: a restructuring of the Old Testament program to a more intentional course progression, the expansion of counseling training in recognition of a growing demand for pastoral counseling, and tweaks to course sequences to lighten the busiest seasons in the seminarian's career.

In some ways, these proposed changes to the curriculum mirror the building project. Some things, like the centrality of Scripture and the best of our Lutheran legacy, must stay the same in a curriculum, just as our new classroom building will maintain the brick-and-timber look of its predecessors. But just as we outfit our new classrooms with updated technology and more flexible seating for a new generation of students, we update our curriculum to equip those students to reach a new generation of sinners in need of the gospel.

ONE FOCUS

Readers who have visited our chapel may have noticed that, in mentioning four windows, I left one out. In the very center is a window etched with the Chi Rho, the first two Greek letters of *Christ*. Just as he is the focus of our worship in that space, he is at the heart of our curriculum, our courses, our classes. Theology is the study of God, and God reveals himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Our biblical theology courses trace the promises made about him in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament. Every doctrine our students learn in systematic theology connects to God's saving work in Jesus. Our practical theology courses teach seminarians how to bring Jesus to worshipers and students, to the struggling and grieving and unbelieving. Our historical theology courses highlight how Jesus has blessed and kept his "little flock" through the ages.

No matter how our buildings look, our curriculum, like our faith, must always rest on him. "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). †

In addition to teaching New Testament and pastoral theology, Samuel Degner serves as the seminary's academic dean.



Fish Stories



What manner of exotic beast is this? My ten-year-old self did not ask that out loud in 1971. But those were my thoughts on one of the first days living at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS), after my father, Richard Balge, began his work as a seminary professor. Exploring around the “lagoon” at the bottom of the seminary hill, I had come across an unfamiliar creature. It had bulging red eyes and massive golden scales. Was it a dragon of some kind? That

couldn't be. Was it dead? The time-honored “poke it with a stick” test provided the answer.

Soon I learned that the sturdy but deceased creature was a carp. This rough fish species was plentiful in the lagoon, and my older brothers learned to catch or spear them. While the carp did not yield a tasty meal, they did put up a feisty fight. Some hours in an aluminum smoker rendered them edible, and their carcasses made fine garden fertilizer.

In the open fields to the west of the oldest homes, we “prof kids” would play traditional sports like softball and Frisbee. Less traditionally, on especially windy days, a military surplus cargo parachute pulled us on pieces of cardboard for a bumpy joy ride. Since 1986, the gymnasium, which also serves as an auditorium for large events, has been standing on some of that land. So, the spot still hosts athletic endeavors, but also concerts, graduation, and assignment days. Coincidentally, those days in May send out vicars and pastors on ministry “rides” which many might also describe as both bumpy and joyous.

But there were indoor adventures for campus dwellers as well. Like walking through the chapel attic, back when it had a lower, flat ceiling. The 2005 remodeling changed that. It also meant another move for the large plaster painting of Wartburg Castle. It had been on the back wall of the chapel, but that wall was removed to expand the worship space in the early 1970's. When professionals balked at attempting the move, the seminary's own maintenance crew safely moved it right outside the chapel entry. Thirty-some years later, they moved it again, to the hallway near the library.

There's also an attic above the tower room. There students played a carillon on a small keyboard at set times, as well as a hymn of praise when the Vietnam War ended in 1975. There was a walk-in cooler, where we stored apples from the remnant trees of an orchard planted to help feed the students. Raincoat-wearing professors took turns spraying the trees with pesticides.

Forty years after first arriving at the seminary as a child, I was “called back” to begin serving on the seminary's governing board. That privilege continues to this day by means of an “adjunct” role with the governing board. A small group of pastors, teachers, and laymen gather twice each year for sanctified business such as extending calls for new professors or passing budgets and building plans.



Fifty years after moving to the campus, I had the joy of posing for a graduation day picture with my father Richard and son Benjamin, representing three generations of pastors in the family (WLS classes of 1958, 1987, and 2021).

Over the years, the campus has changed in numerous ways. Because of the 2008 removal of the dam which formed the lagoon, salmon now inhabit the campus stream. Of course, the seminary was never about carp or salmon.

But you could say it has always been about another fish. Namely, the ancient Christian symbol that began as a secret symbol for persecuted Christians to identify themselves to one another. The five Greek letters in the word for “fish” worked as an acrostic for “Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior.”

The expression “fish stories” suggests exaggerated or even fictitious tales. The carp and salmon stories are neither. Ultimately, though, they are ordinary, as is the story of one person's on-and-off fifty-five-year connection with a campus. But the story of “Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior” is extraordinary. It's not a “reasonable” story, but his story remains the reason for the seminary's existence. The Sinless One suffers and dies for sinners. His death means everlasting life for all who believe. The professors teach about him, the students learn about him, and the eternally important fishing still goes on. The kind Jesus spoke of—“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people” (Matthew 4:19). †

Pastor Jon Balge, who lived for many years on the seminary campus, serves

St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and as an adjunct member of the seminary's governing board.

Music Helps Build Gospel Messengers

“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts” (Colossians 3:16).

I write this article from the front of a fifty-seven-seat motor coach. Behind me, fifty-six seminarians are catching a quick nap on the first day of our spring choir tour. Their nap is well deserved. Since they returned to campus after Christmas break, they have been hard at work—digging through commentaries, wrestling with languages, crafting sermons, penning papers, and leading lessons. All of this is done so that the Word of Christ might have its way with these future full-time proclaimers of the gospel!

The fifty-six men on the choir tour have put in extra work, roughly the equivalent of an extra three-credit course, as they meet three times a week to learn, practice, polish, and then memorize an hour and fifteen minutes of music. You can hear the program slowly taking shape as their anthems echo through the hallways of the seminary’s classroom building. At first, the sounds are hesitant and shaky; the mistakes are obvious. But over time, a program is built. And then they go off to sing to the saints in WELS churches across America.

But this is key: as they build a program to take on the road, the music they sing is building and having its way with them. How could it not? The gospel of Jesus goes to work in them through the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs they sing. How wonderful that fifty-six unique creations of God sing the praises of their Creator. Baptized, they praise the triune God who washed them. As God’s redeemed, they proclaim the Redeemer’s work. As men who have been raised from death to life, they sing of Christ, the



resurrection and the life. The music in their mouths is directly connected to the faith in their hearts. For months, they have been internalizing the Church’s great devotional texts. As they do, the Spirit is building them up from the inside out. The music they sing forms them. And then it moves them.

It moves them to sing so that they might teach and admonish the saints with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Their music does much more than “beautify a service” or produce pretty sounds in a sanctuary. The gospel of Christ saturates their song. Their music is a sonic sermon that comes in different musical styles, from various cultures, with a variety of instruments—all for this purpose: the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to his people!

And God’s people are listening. As the director, my back is always to the congregation as I direct the choir. But the men of the choir often tell me

what they observe in the pews. They see the impact their proclamation has on the faces of God’s people: the head resting on a shoulder as a song comforts them; the tears welling up in their eyes as they reflect on the “glory I shall see” while mourning the loss of a loved one. They witness it in the joyful reactions of God’s people after the concert. They frequently receive thanks from new Christians or even non-Christians who listened and now understand more about Christ than when they first sat down and opened the program.

The Seminary Chorus has helped to build men for full-time ministry for ninety-five years. Since their very first public appearance on April 19, 1931, the chorus has helped build others up with the sounds of salvation. The Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes! †

Aaron Christie serves as director of the Seminary Chorus, as dean of chapel, and as professor of worship and preaching.

Building a Pastor's Library

In March of 2025, the Lutheran Seminary Bookstore (the seminary bookstore's official name) quietly marked a significant milestone: one hundred years of service. The anniversary passed without much fanfare, yet it offered an opportunity to reflect on a century of God's faithful building of pastors, libraries, and support for the proclamation of the gospel.

The bookstore's story began in 1925, when seminary students recognized a practical need. Books and supplies were costing more than seemed necessary, so the students took action. They established their own bookstore and appointed a manager from among their numbers. From the beginning, the purpose was clear and student-focused: to provide substantial discounts on books and supplies so future pastors could build their libraries without undue financial burden.



That mission has remained unchanged for the past one hundred years. While the world, the campus, and even the bookstore itself have evolved, the heart of the bookstore has stayed the same: to serve seminary students by providing affordable, reliable access to the tools needed for a lifetime of gospel ministry.

BUILDING LIBRARIES, ONE BOOK AT A TIME

A pastor's library is more than a collection of books. It is a tool for faithful preaching, careful teaching, and lifelong learning. For generations, the seminary bookstore has played a quiet but vital role in that work by ensuring students have access to solid theological resources at an affordable cost.

One of the most enduring and beloved ways the bookstore has served students is through its book auctions. Over the years, retired pastors have generously donated their personal libraries, collections that often represent decades of ministry, study, and pastoral care. These books are then made available to current students through regular auctions.

For students, the auctions offer an unmatched opportunity

to acquire theological resources at minimal cost. For alumni, they provide a meaningful way to continue supporting the training of future pastors. In this way, the bookstore serves as a bridge between generations, as one pastor's well-used books become another's foundation for public ministry.

These book auctions continue today. Those interested in donating books are encouraged to contact the bookstore for more information (books@wls.edu).

BUILDING SPACE TO SERVE BETTER

As the seminary campus continues to grow and adapt, so too has the bookstore. Over the past three years, several remodeling and reorganization efforts have been undertaken to better serve students and the wider seminary community.

New bookshelves were purchased and installed, improving both storage and accessibility. Technology upgrades streamlined operations and improved record-keeping, and, for the first time, students and visitors could use credit or debit cards for purchases. Clearer systems were also developed to organize and process donated books, allowing materials to be evaluated, sorted, and made available more efficiently.

While none of these improvements changed the bookstore's mission, they strengthened its ability to carry it out. Special thanks are due to bookstore managers Alex Dimke (2023–24), Jack Vogel (2024–25), and Nathan Pausma (2025–26) for their dedicated work in updating and improving the bookstore's facilities.

Another recent development is the launch of a pop-up online seminary merchandise store. This new platform allows alumni, students, and supporters to purchase seminary apparel and merchandise from anywhere, strengthening connections across distances and providing an additional way to support the seminary's mission.

A TIME TO BUILD: BY GOD'S GRACE

Ecclesiastes reminds us that there is "a time to build." On the seminary campus, such building is visible in blueprints, construction plans, and renovated spaces. Just as importantly, God continues to build through a bookstore that faithfully serves those preparing for ministry.

For more than a century, the seminary bookstore has existed for the sake of the gospel and those called to proclaim it. As the seminary looks to the future, its mission remains unchanged. By God's grace, the bookstore will continue to serve students, connect generations of pastors, and support the ongoing work of building Christ's church, one book at a time. †

Jack Vogel, a vicar during the 2025–26 school year, was the 2024–25 manager of the seminary bookstore.

Building Relationships

Seminary students work at a variety of part-time jobs when classes end at 12:30 p.m. Some go off to factories and enjoy working with their hands. Others stay in their suits and support local ministries, furthering their preparation for full-time service. My first two years at the seminary I got my hands dirty and worked on the campus grounds crew. However, returning from my vicar year, I was asked to serve as the seminary's student recruiter for my senior year's part-time job. From riding lawn mowers to encouraging the next generation of called workers, I'm reminded that our gifts can serve God in many contexts.

Much of my work focuses on building relationships with three groups: grade schoolers, high schoolers, and college students. Grade schoolers tend to dream big—firefighters, professional athletes, doctors, inventors. When I visit local grade schools, I ask, "What about becoming a pastor or a teacher? If we're going to dream big, why not dream of a job that gives you a front-row seat to God's miracle of gifting eternal life?" With grade schoolers, my goal is simple: start the conversation about serving as a called worker.

Being in the Milwaukee area gives me frequent access to local Lutheran high schools, where juniors and seniors are moving from dreaming about the future to choosing it. As graduation approaches, life becomes stressful. I often hear, "I don't know what I want to do with my life. I just know I want my work to make a difference." At that stage, my role shifts from starting the conversation to directing it. I tell them, "Being a called worker isn't the right path or the wrong path—it's a path. It may not change the whole world. But it will mean the world to those whom God saves through your service."

A significant part of my work is investing in relationships with pastor-track students at Martin Luther College



(MLC). Whether I'm driving to New Ulm, Minnesota, or welcoming them to Mequon, there are many opportunities to encourage one another in pastoral training. For many at MLC, the greatest challenge is the amount of schooling ahead of them. Four years of college followed by four years of seminary naturally raises the question: "Is this worth the time and energy? What if I later realize I don't want to be a pastor?" As someone nearing the end of that path, I'm able to speak directly to those concerns. I tell them, "Every day in the pastor track is a day growing in God's Word. Even if you discern that pastoral ministry is not

for you, you will not have wasted your time. Your faith will have grown." I'm grateful, too, for the eager seminary students who join me in encouraging our MLC brothers to remain faithful in their preparation.

Ultimately, I understand the brief relationships I form as a student recruiter will not single-handedly usher in the next generation of called workers. But when I speak with classmates, many of them trace their decision back to a simple encouragement: "You would make a great pastor," or, "You would be a wonderful teacher." The strongest influence toward public ministry is rarely a recruiter. It is the people closest to the person—parents, pastors, teachers, coaches, friends—who recognize God-given gifts and name them out loud. They plant the idea. A solo student recruiter might inspire one or two into ministry. But imagine the impact if an entire Christian community intentionally encouraged gifted young men and women to consider a calling centered on sharing God's Word with the world. My prayer: Lord of the harvest, send out workers into the harvest field. Amen. †

Micah Otto is a 2026 graduate of the seminary.

One Year In: God's Faithful Hand on Display

Time has a way of surprising us. It has been just over a year since I arrived, but in many ways it feels as though only a few months have passed. With that passing of time has come a growing awareness of the Lord's faithful hand at work, often in ways quieter and more patient than we might expect.

those steady efforts have helped mission advancement become a more visible and integrated part of campus life—not for its own sake, but in service to the seminary's calling: pastors forming pastors.

One visible sign of the Lord's provision has been the continued progress of the *Compelled* capital

These improvements may seem technical on the surface, but they serve a deeply pastoral purpose: honoring the gifts God's people entrust to the seminary and stewarding them responsibly, transparently, and thoughtfully.

Another quiet blessing of recent months has been a growing unity in how we speak about WLS. Rather than focusing on individual initiatives, our communication is increasingly centered on a single story—who we are, why we exist, and how the Lord is using this place to prepare pastors for service in North America and beyond.

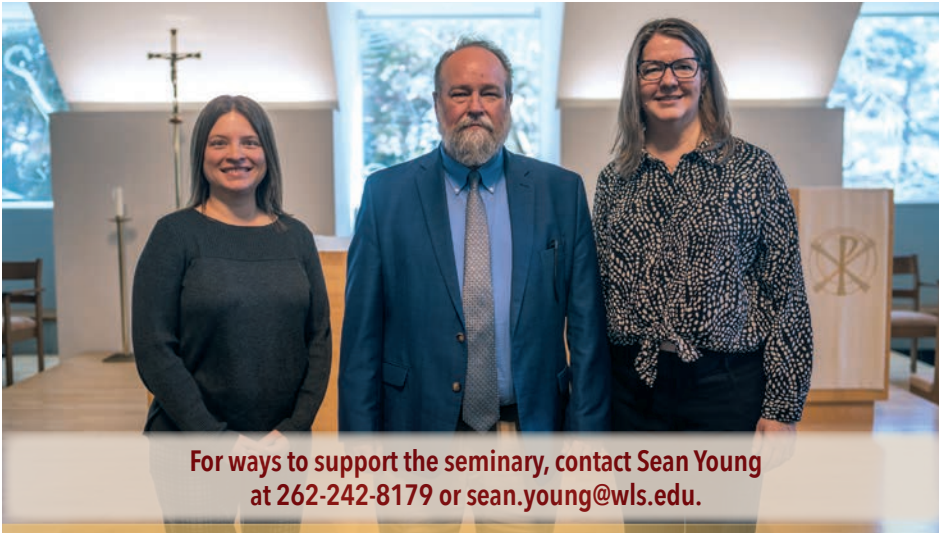
That clarity matters. It helps congregations, supporters, and future partners see the seminary not as a distant institution, but as a living part of the synod's mission. When that story is told well, support follows—not because of marketing skill, but because hearts recognize the work of the Lord.

Not every challenge disappears simply because progress is being made. Growth requires ongoing refinement, honest communication, and a great deal of patience. There is still work to be done in aligning expectations and working together effectively, and there will always be more to learn.

Yet as I look ahead, I do so with confidence—not in plans or systems, but in the Lord who has already shown his faithfulness. The coming months will focus on continuing the work already begun: strengthening relationships, communicating the seminary's mission clearly, and cultivating support that will sustain this work for generations to come.

Above all, I am grateful—grateful for colleagues who serve with humility and purpose, grateful for supporters who give generously, and grateful for a Lord who continues to bless his church in ways far beyond our ability to measure. †

Sean Young is the seminary's director of mission advancement.



For ways to support the seminary, contact Sean Young at 262-242-8179 or sean.young@wls.edu.

Looking back, I am reminded how rarely God's blessings arrive on our preferred timetable. Instead, he works steadily and purposefully, always for the good of his people. This first year at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) has been a lesson in that truth. While the days have moved quickly, the Lord has been laying foundations—strengthening relationships, clarifying purpose, and shaping our work to serve his mission more faithfully.

Much of what has unfolded during this first year would never make headlines. Systems have been refined. Conversations have deepened. Trust has grown. Yet in all of it, the Lord has been at work, quietly aligning the efforts of mission advancement with the broader life of the seminary and the mission of our synod.

This kind of progress requires patience. It calls for a willingness to plant seeds before seeing fruit, to build quietly rather than quickly. Over time,

campaign. By God's grace, gifts and pledges have surpassed \$8 million. While numbers never tell the whole story, they do reflect something deeply encouraging: the trust and generosity of God's people.

What has stood out most in conversations with supporters is not simply enthusiasm for projects, but a shared confidence in the purpose behind them. Donors have responded to a clearer understanding of how facilities and resources support the formation of future pastors and their families. Once again, the Lord has reminded us that his people are eager to support the work of the gospel when its mission is clearly and faithfully shared.

The Lord has also provided by strengthening our team. With the addition of an experienced mission advancement coordinator, important stewardship work is being carried out with greater care and consistency.

Building Strong Marriages

Have you noticed how different a vacation can be than what you envisioned? So much happens that you hadn't anticipated. Young couples looking forward to a lifetime of ministry get the same surprise. What they think it will be like is usually very different than what they live through.

There's no way around it; once they leave the seminary, life will hit fast and hard. Both the pastor and his wife are called to serve God's people in a big way. The man is called to be the shepherd of the flock. He will give unending attention to the application of scriptural truth to his people's hurts, dreams, and everything in between. The pastor's wife is called to be the shepherd's best friend and biggest human support. Because these callings are so important, the seminary provides a workshop each February, where seminary couples can focus on their friendship as husband and wife.

The retreat is led by a seasoned pastor and his wife. The seminary wives especially enjoy exploring with a veteran pastor's wife how to navigate loving and forgiving your husband, setting boundaries for your family while being open and transparent with members, navigating friendships in and out of the congregation, and having a career while prioritizing the work of the Lord and rearing children.

During the retreat both husband and wife reclaim their identity as children of God, re-establish their purpose according to the great commandment and the great commission, and they explore the impact of communication styles, personality types, natural strengths, and spiritual gifts.

They also discuss what a pastor's family rhythm and devotional life might look like. They map out a healthy balanced work week and discuss



how to pivot when the ideal work week is obliterated by real life.

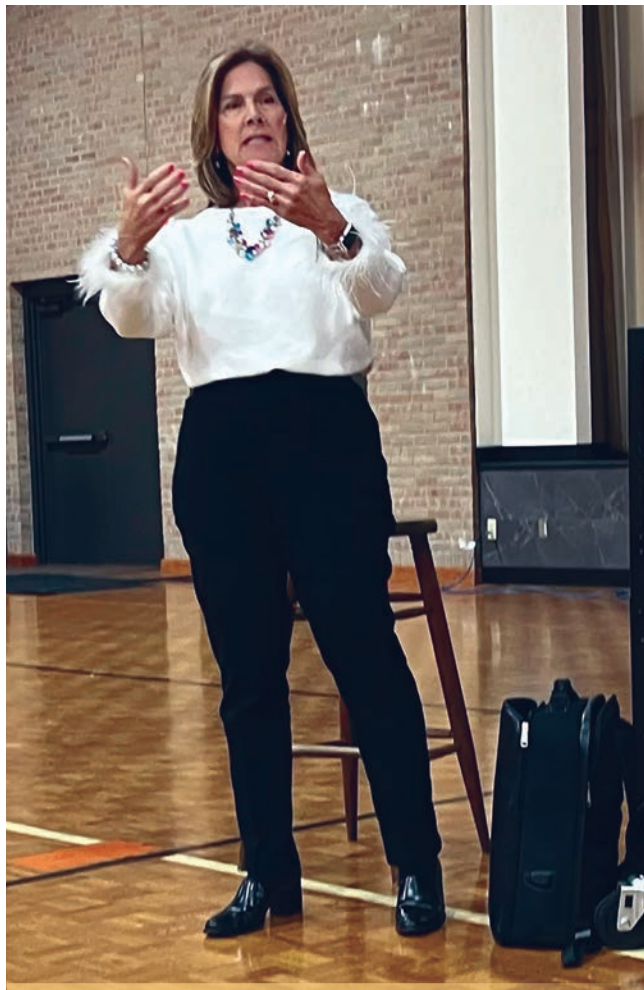
The ideal pastor's wife is presented as an attitude of the heart driven by faith in Jesus instead of an external stereotype set by a church culture limited by space and time. The future pastors are challenged to think of themselves as the shepherd of their family as much as they are for the church. They talk about devotional life, date nights, vacations, work weeks, time off, and resiliency based on good physical, emotional, and spiritual health practices.

During the workshop there's plenty of time for breakout discussion with other couples and within each couple too. Everyone is given resources to use later as they strike out on the great adventure of parish ministry for Jesus and his bride.

It's a lot to process in one day. But look at it this way: if we can turn the couple's ship just ten degrees while it's in the harbor, then on the other side of the ocean it will be in a far better place.

When Jesus was walking the earth, he poured hours of instruction into his disciples and the women who served by their sides. In that same spirit our seminary takes time to pour into the pastors and wives who serve, before they take the reins of a congregation. What's more, everyone is reminded that they will never be alone in the ministry. Jesus is always with them and so are all the other pastors and wives marching to his drumbeat. Keep this effort in your prayers. These couples are the heart and soul of how Jesus still makes disciples from all nations today. †

After serving as the president of the WELS South Central District for many years, Pastor Don Patterson now serves as a ministry recruitment counselor. He and his wife Mary have led the marriage and ministry workshop several times.



Building on the Past

I've been blessed throughout my ministry with some very interesting experiences. I've often told the members of my congregation that I've said many things over the course of my ministry, but "I'm bored" has never been one of them.

I was privileged to vicar for a district president, the late Rev. Reginald Pope. I saw firsthand all the difficult work that these men do day in and day out. In retirement, he and his family joined my little congregation in Oconto Falls, Wisconsin, where his wife, Pat, had grown up. It was my privilege to conduct his funeral service and bring his family the comfort that only the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ can give.

I graduated from the seminary in 1994 and was assigned to be the last tutor in the history of Northwestern College (NWC) in Watertown, Wisconsin. I never would have dreamed when I graduated from NWC in 1990 that she would be closed within five years. There were all kinds of historic "lasts" that year from the last opening service, the last homecoming, and culminating with the last graduation.

For the 1995 school year, I was one of the first four tutors in the history of Martin Luther College. There were all kinds of "firsts" that year. I was the first women's soccer coach, and our team won the first homecoming game. I wrote the first dorm handbook with the assistance of my fellow tutors. At the beginning of the year, it was my privilege to bring comfort to many of the former NWC men when one of their own from the incoming junior class was tragically killed in a work accident. It was a challenging year, but the Lord's blessings and the faculty's



faithfulness brought us through.

I could go on for pages. But what does this have to do with the work of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) Alumni? Well, I'm not the young man I once was. I am far closer to the end of my ministry than I am the beginning. No man can serve in this glorious office forever. I want to help support and encourage a new generation of pastors who will be able to serve faithfully long after I'm off the scene.

I became involved with the WLS Alumni because I started coming annually to the WLS Symposium. WLS Alumni meet in the morning before the Symposium starts. I liked being kept up to date on the latest news happening on the seminary hill. At that annual meeting, two scholarships are given to seminary students. It is always a blessing to see the young men who received our scholarships thank us for them. The Lord of the harvest is indeed answering our prayers that he would send more workers into his harvest fields.

I am privileged to serve as the

vice president of the WLS Alumni. Besides functioning in the absence of our president, Rev. Mark Eckert, I also make sure that the list of WLS graduates is kept up to date, especially regarding those whom the Lord has taken to his side. I can't take any credit for that because Prof. Em. John Brenner does an admirable job of keeping on top of it. It is a blessing at our meetings to sing stanzas of "For All the Saints" to thank God for the service of those who are no longer with us and to thank him for bringing them safely home.

I ask that you keep the vital work of WLS in your prayers. Pray that he would give the professors wisdom and faithfulness. Pray that the students would grow in knowledge and in the one true faith. And, if you are able, consider a gift to the WLS Alumni so that we can help defray the cost of educating our future pastors through one of our annual scholarships. †

Pastor Matthew Arnold serves St. Luke's Lutheran Church and School in Vassar, Michigan, and as the vice president of the WLS Alumni.

Behind-the-Scenes Support

Every building relies on countless parts, all fitting together, to keep it standing. Some of these parts are more visible than others, but each one is essential.

In a similar way, numerous people work faithfully every day so that the seminary can carry out its mission. Some are more visible than others, but each person has a valuable part to play. Let's take a moment to meet some who are new in the last year or two. Note that these are certainly not all who work at the seminary; many more serve each day on our custodial and grounds crews, in the kitchen, and in maintaining technology. But here are a few you might meet if you're visiting the seminary campus.

After many years of service in the seminary library, Dorcas Tackmier and Brenda Tiefel retired in 2025. In the years they served, they assisted countless seminarians and pastors.

If you come to study or meet in the library now, you can greet Laura Guzman, the new assistant librarian. Laura's experience includes working as a librarian at Dallas College and Concordia University Irvine, as well as teaching at St. Croix Lutheran Academy and Pan de Vida Iglesia Luterana. Laura says, "In my current role as assistant librarian, I am grateful to serve our seminary community by connecting library users to meaningful information resources that support their study and ministry."

The mission advancement office is now led by Sean Young, who began his work in the spring of 2025. Assisting Sean as mission advancement coordinator is Chris Himm. She and Sean are happy to help those moved to offer financial support to the seminary. Chris says, "I enjoy being part of the behind-the-scenes work that helps connect seminary partners to the mission of preparing men for pastoral ministry. I also have the opportunity to support campus events that celebrate our future pastors, bring longtime seminary friends back for a visit, and introduce our beautiful campus to new visitors."

Grow in Grace welcomed Naomi Strusz as executive assistant. Pastors attending Summer Quarter, participating in an online class, or attending a ministry retreat may meet

or correspond with Naomi. Naomi brings with her many years of ministry experience, having taught at Martin Luther School in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and having served on the leadership team at Kingdom Prep Lutheran High School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She comments, "I have a deep appreciation for ministry work and am grateful for the opportunity to support pastors in their ongoing growth and service to Christ's Church." She adds the fun fact that she may be the only person to have worked at both WELS schools with all-male student bodies (the seminary and Kingdom Prep).

The business office is a vital part of the work that keeps the seminary running smoothly. Accounting Director Carol Puglisi is transitioning to retirement status after almost two decades of service. We give thanks for her dedicated, behind-the-scenes work with accounting and with the financial aid committee. Nicole Westra, after working in the business office as accountant for several years, also left to pursue other ventures. Mandy Degner has taken up the position of accounting director. Mandy has experience in public ministry and as an accountant, most recently at St. John's Lutheran in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.

Even the personnel behind this magazine saw a change in 2026. After serving the seminary as mission advancement coordinator, we said farewell to Lori Donehey (formerly Guse). For many years, Lori was responsible for taking the photographs for *Κηρυξ* and for numerous campus services and events each year. If you have marveled at a photo of the seminary campus, students, or a special event, chances are you have Lori to thank for it. Barbara Rickaby, who had been part-time executive assistant for Grow in Grace, has now moved into the full-time role of communications coordinator.

These are only a few of the many people whose work enables the seminary to stand strong and carry out its mission. We thank the Lord, "the builder of everything" (Hebrews 3:4), for all of them and their labor in him. †

Jonathan Micheel teaches preaching and church history at the seminary.





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