

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.