

LifeTogether

THE MAGAZINE OF
WARTBURG THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Summer 2023



Submitted photo

Celebrating the Class of 2023!

LifeTogether

The official magazine of Wartburg Theological Seminary for our alumni and friends. Permission is granted for additional use in congregations. Founded in 1854 and located in Dubuque, Iowa since 1889, Wartburg Theological Seminary is one of seven seminaries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

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SUMMER EDITION 2023

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Mission Statement

Wartburg Theological Seminary serves Christ's church through the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by being a worship-centered community of critical theological reflection where learning leads to mission and mission informs learning.

The community embodies God's mission by stewarding resources for engaging, equipping, and sending collaborative leaders who interpret, proclaim and live the gospel of Jesus Christ for a world created for communion with God and in need of personal and social healing.

Contents

Summer Edition 2023

CELEBRATING THE CLASS OF 2023	04
169 TH CLASS OF WARTBURG THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY	
CLASS COMPOSITE PHOTO	08
THE CLASS OF 2023!	
GETTING TO KNOW CHERYL PETERSON	09
WELCOMING THE NEW ACADEMIC DEAN	
ROOTED AND RENEWING	10
WARTBURG THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY'S STRATEGIC PLAN, 2024-2026	
CLIMATE CHANGE GRANT	12
GRANT SUPPORTS CLIMATE CHANGE AWARENESS AT WTS	
A PATH TO BELONGING: OVERCOMING CLERGY LONELINESS	14
AN INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR MARY KAY DUCHENE	
GETTING TO KNOW MIKE JOHNSON	16
WELCOMING THE NEW VICE PRESIDENT OF DEVELOPMENT	
GIFTS OF GRAIN	17
A UNIQUE WAY TO MAKE A CHARITABLE GIFT	
FACULTY AND STAFF UPDATES	18
RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS AND RECOGNITIONS	

Celebrating the Class of 2023

169TH WARTBURG SEMINARY COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

"Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received."

—1 Peter 4:10, the Class of 2023's chosen verse

Wartburg Theological Seminary (WTS) honored 70 degree and certificate candidates and three special guests on Sunday, May 14, 2023. Graduation festivities included a banquet for graduates and special guests, their families, and friends in Dubuque on Saturday. Baccalaureate was held on a rainy Sunday morning in the Loehe Chapel at WTS, followed by a reception and campus open house. The weekend concluded with the 169th WTS Commencement at St. Joseph the Worker Church on Sunday afternoon.

Graduates of Wartburg Theological Seminary will serve the church and world by providing leadership in congregations and other ministry settings as pastors, deacons, youth leaders, chaplains, and various other positions.

Hannah DiPasquale, M.Div. graduate, shared about the journey to graduation: "I still remember the amazement (and perhaps a little uneasiness) from the Wartburg faculty and staff that first Prolog Week in the fall 2019, as we all squeezed into Fritschel Auditorium for new student orientation. We were so excited to be there, and there were just SO many of us! We were unaware of the dynamics we would have to navigate together: a pandemic and church in constant transition, losses and letdowns, changes and growth. This journey has been possible only by the grace of God, manifested in the Wartburg community. We are a community that is as intimate as a Zoom breakout room yet as broad as the distance from Alabama to Alaska and beyond. What a beautiful experience this has been, not only full of learning, but also reimagining what it is to be church together in an ever-changing and growing world."

Classmate Edwin Aparicio Ortiz shared: "When I made the decision to go to seminary, I knew it would not be easy. I felt that as an ESL student, I was not ready to face such a big challenge. But after a time of reflection, my wife and I made the decision. If you ask me how these four years were, I will tell



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you that it felt very short, but if you ask my wife, her answer will be that it was an eternity. Whether a short time or a long time, my experience on this journey was accompanied by the great support of my family, friends, congregations, my classmates, my teachers, and the entire Wartburg community. During all these four years, I can testify that I was not alone. God surrounded me with wonderful human beings from the beginning until graduation day.”

In addition to the graduates and their families and friends, WTS welcomed and awarded three special guests for their accomplishments in the academy, the church, and/or society.

The Honorary Degree of Doctor of Divinity was presented to Kathleen D. (Kadi) Billman. The Living Loehe Award was given to Knut Holter and Kelly Sherman-Conroy (Mato Wašté Winyan). Sherman-Conroy also gave the Commencement address. The Living Loehe Award was established by Wartburg Seminary in 1973 as a way of honoring individuals who have given distinguished service to and through the church and exemplify Christ’s call to be disciples in the context of their own daily lives and professional commitments. WTS is grateful to God for each of these individuals and their contributions to a world that longs to hear and see the gospel.

The joy of graduates and honored guests was palpable as they received their awards and diplomas. M.Div. graduate Myron Crawford reflected: “Throughout my time at Wartburg, there was always uncertainty and doubt that crept in. Not having been in a classroom setting for over 25 years, I didn’t know if I could do it. Thankfully, I found my people—the ones I could reach out to and confide in. They became my support system. They are now my family. Without my family, none of this would have been possible. ‘Together,

Wherever We Are’ will always ring true for me.”

Wartburg Seminary is proud to send the 169th class of graduates out to serve in Jesus’ name and take the next step as faith leaders in their call to ministry.

MORE ABOUT THE HONOREES

Kathleen D. (Kadi) Billman attended Muskingum College and received her M.Div., Th.M, and Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary. Dr. Billman served at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, first as the Assistant Professor of Pastoral Theology, then as Dean (1999–2009), and finally as the John H. Tietjen Professor of Pastoral Ministry: Pastoral Theology. Since 2009, Dr. Billman has served as co-editor (with Dr. Craig Nesson) of *Currents in Theology and Mission*, a joint venture of LSTC and Wartburg Seminary. Dr. Billman was married to James F. (Jim) Galuhn until his death in 2018. Their son Adam is married to Kaylee, and they have two children, James and Charles. On January 1, 2023, Dr. Billman married her dear friend Daniel Migliore. They live in Princeton, NJ, where they enjoy frequent theological conversations, thought-provoking movies, and duets on the piano (Kadi) and clarinet (Dan).

Knut Holter was born in Oslo in 1958. In 1980 he married Berly and the two have three children and eight grandchildren. He earned an M.Th. from the School of Mission and Theology (Stavanger) in 1985 and a Ph.D. from the University of Oslo in 1993. He was ordained in the Church of Norway (Lutheran) in 1986, and serves regularly as pastor and Sunday school teacher in his home congregation. Throughout most of his career, Holter worked at the School of Mission and Theology (today part of VID Specialized University) as a Professor of Biblical Studies from 2002 to 2022, and as President from 2004 to 2010. Since 2022 he has been Professor at NLA University

Dr. Kathleen (Kadi) Billman

HONORARY DOCTOR OF DIVINITY
DEGREE RECIPIENT



College (Bergen). For the last 25 years, his main research and publishing focus has been on African interpretive strategies vis-à-vis the Old Testament, from three perspectives: first, networking with and analysis of the first two generations of African Old Testament scholars; second, analysis of examples of popular Old Testament interpretation in Nigeria and Madagascar; and third, analysis of colonial Old Testament interpretation in relation to Africa.

Kelly Sherman-Conroy (Mato Wašté Winyan, Good Bear Woman) is a member of the Oglala Lakota Nation. An Indigenous theologian, Dr. Sherman-Conroy specializes in social justice, racial and ethnic diversity, trauma and healing, Indigenous leadership, and community. She is the first Native woman theologian to have earned a Ph.D. in the ELCA, with a dissertation focused on "The Reclamation of Lakota Spiritual Sovereignty." She brings a theological perspective emphasizing Indigenous spirituality, history, and culture, specifically how these influence Christianity and interreligious dialogue and help Indigenous people heal from trauma. Walking with people of all cultures, she actively provides ministry around the exploration of intersections of identity, personal narratives, and faith. Dr. Sherman-Conroy is a devoted mother to her young son Ciaran. She deeply values her connections with friends and family, and she honors her Indigenous ancestors by inspiring people to make a difference.

Knut Holter

LIVING LOEHE AWARD RECIPIENT



Kelly Sherman-Conroy; Mato Wašté Winyan

LIVING LOEHE AWARD RECIPIENT





Prof. Susan Dordt Dr. Beth Ennis-Hansen Rev. Dr. Nathan Frotscher, Interim Academic Dean Rev. Dr. Ann Fritsche (emerita) Rev. Dr. Samuel D. Giese Dr. Samantha Givens Rev. Dr. Kristin Johnson-Lingen, President Rev. Dr. Martin Lutzmann Rev. Dr. Craig Messner



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Nathaniel Adams MDIV Lars Anderson MDIV Edwin Ayres-Oates MDIV



Cake Arnold MDIV Rebecca Barr MDIV Jennifer Barker MADM



John Baynton MDIV Christina Beukala MDIV



Dorothy Campbell, Certificate of Attendance Angela Chason MDIV



Susan Cota TEEM Myron Lavelle MDIV Holly Cummings MDIV Nichole D'Onofrio MDIV Hannah D'Onofrio MDIV Joseph O'Brien MDIV Anna Elias MADM Jonas Eliass MDIV Jennifer Eisenbrock, Advanced Certificate in Diaconal Ministry Emily Erskine MDIV Katie Hode Evans MDIV



Conor Freeman, Lutheran Learning Jonathan Fry MDIV Joshua Gomez MA Eric Harb MADM Vicki Hedger TEEM Laurie Horvath MDIV Cheryl Horvath MDIV Candice Hynes MDIV Eve Huff MDIV Lisa Hume MDIV



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Jonathan Lyle MDIV Amy Marlow MADM Jessica McCarthy MADM Sean McCarthy MDIV Ruth Mwangi MDIV Rebekah Nathan MDIV Gretchen Olsen Kopp MDIV Robert Overholt TEEM Roger Ruppstad MDIV Brenda Ruder TEEM



Rev. Rogers TEEM Matthew Rozier MDIV Kurt Spangenberg MADM Melissa Semmen MDIV Harry Schepers MDIV Glenn Scribner MDIV Michael Schulte, Lutheran Learning Daniel Shanon MDIV Kelly Tomaszewski MDIV



Maddison Tipton MDIV Anna Long MDIV Brend Van Beek MA Laura Wallerme MDIV Jennifer Watson MADM Anthony Winkler MDIV

Chad Duffy TEEM Deborah Hamner TEEM Jennifer Sosinski TEEM

Getting to Know Rev. Dr. Cheryl Peterson

WELCOMING THE NEW ACADEMIC DEAN



WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART ABOUT WORKING WITH STUDENTS?

I am a people person. I'm extroverted, I enjoy meeting new people and learning about them, and their passions for ministry and mission. I am excited to get to know the Wartburg community—I love networking and connecting people with each other and resources to help them succeed and grow.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO MOST ABOUT WORKING AT WARTBURG?

I believe that the Holy Spirit brought me here. I try to listen to the guiding of the Holy Spirit in my personal and my professional life and it really felt like the Spirit was guiding me to this place. All of my career at Trinity and now at Wartburg is to serve the mission of the Church, which is to serve the mission of God. I'm excited about the mission and focus of Wartburg, the collegiality among the faculty and staff, and the innovative and proactive thinking about how to best deliver theological education in the constantly changing context we're in. It seems like the best place I could serve God; it's the best place I could be. In fact, in 2016 I was in an Association of Theological Schools meeting with Dr. Kris Stache and she was describing the very collaborative, ground-up process that led to the "three pathways" for students to earn a degree at Wartburg. The process that Dr. Stache described sounded so exciting. And now I get to be a part of it.

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU'D LIKE THE WARTBURG COMMUNITY TO KNOW ABOUT YOU?

Come football season, I will root for the Ohio State Buckeyes. What can I say? "I'm a Buckeye till I die and I OH-IO!"

WOULD YOU TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOURSELF?

I'm a native Ohioan. I grew up in Worthington and attended Wittenberg University in Springfield, OH, before receiving an M.Div. at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and a Ph.D. at Marquette University. I have served pastorates in central Pennsylvania and Milwaukee, WI. Most recently, I served as the Associate Dean for Academics and Professor of Systematic Theology at Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University in Columbus, OH. My husband, the Rev. Dr. Charles Peterson, grew up in the Quad Cities. He went to the University of Iowa and is very excited to be coming back to what he calls the "real" Midwest.

Are you or is someone you know considering seminary?

Attend an upcoming **Online Open House** or **start a conversation** with the Wartburg Seminary Admissions team! We can't wait to meet and walk with you in your discernment journey.

ROOTED AND RENEWING

WARTBURG THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY'S STRATEGIC PLAN, 2024-2026

I am excited to introduce Wartburg Theological Seminary's new strategic plan, Rooted and Renewing.

Rooted and Renewing is the title of Professor Troy Troftgruben's recent book, in which he looks back at models and practices described in the New Testament and invites us to see their potential for helping recreate and strengthen the church in the 21st century.

Rooted and Renewing: It is a vibrant, hopeful metaphor that describes well Wartburg Seminary's understanding of our specific call in this moment to follow the Holy Spirit and participate in God's mission in the world. **Rooted and Renewing:** Wartburg is both rooted in our longstanding historical commitments, and also constantly renewing the strong theological formation that happens here.

There are three main areas of focus in this strategic plan: Diversity, Care and Communication.

By diversity, we mean cultivating an inclusive sense of belonging for all of God's children. Rooted in our historic commitments to the global church, cross-cultural engagement, and open questions, we are forming leaders who can nurture and accompany Christian communities and congregations as they become places of reconciliation, hope, and bridge-building. The church's very nature is counter-cultural, as it brings people together as the body of Christ based not on affinity, convenience, similarity, or shared political beliefs. The church is a group that God has chosen and called together to proclaim the gospel and serve the neighbor and stranger. Therefore, today, Wartburg Seminary is reaching: continually renewing our RIC, anti-racist and Indigenous-affirming commitments, forming the next generation of public ministers who can invite congregations to live in the grey and create more purple, forging unusual friendships and fostering challenging conversations. As we reach toward God's future, we will form resilient, adaptive leaders. Those leaders will be equipped well to serve in diverse and challenging contexts, respecting those contexts as they engage in dialogue that invites people into the liberating power of the gospel that empowers them to name and help dismantle structures of oppression. We will build on our work with Latine and rural ministries to broaden the pipeline of potential students to include and welcome those from many different communities and backgrounds.

By care, we mean intentionally tending to our most valuable resources: first and foremost, our students, staff, and faculty; and secondly, the physical campus we call home. We are investing in our community now for the sake of the future needs of the church. For 150+ years, we have been rooted here in Dubuque, Iowa, with a beautiful campus that has had a recognizable profile for generations and also experienced many developments over the years, including our current renovation of Fritschel Hall. Now, we are reaching into the future from these roots, as we continue to work to integrate more green technologies in all aspects of our life together. At Wartburg, we cultivate a culture of gratitude and celebration, regularly taking time to thank and honor our faculty and staff. We continue to develop ways to implement enrichment events for faculty and staff, and provide opportunities for growth and development. The faculty plan to engage in further trainings in both diverse pedagogies and assessment tools that are meant to address particular student needs and further support student formation.

Finally, by communication, we are pointing to our plans to strengthen the connective tissue that binds us all together as church around the world, deepening historic partnerships and forging new ones, and sharing with clarity and joy our own identity—our mission, vision, and values that guide our work. Rooted in our longstanding relationships with both ELCA synods, offices, and congregations, and also LWF partner churches and communities, we are reaching out to new communities to listen actively and learn about them, their cultures, and our own participation in systems of oppression. In so doing, we will engage deeply with all constituencies and communities to share who we are, where we are going, and what we know and profess about the liberating hope and joy of the gospel with the world and its peoples.

We give thanks to God for you, and your partnership with us in God's mission in the world!



Kristin Johnston Largen
President



Diversity: We will reflect the wonderful diversity of God's human creation.

We will:

- Commit to an attitude of mission-driven innovation and relational, radical hospitality, so students, faculty, staff, and constituents experience the diverse and beloved community of Christ in life at Wartburg Seminary, wherever they are.
- Recruit resilient, adaptive leaders and form and equip them to serve well in diverse and challenging contexts, respecting those contexts as they engage in dialogue that invites people into the liberating power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to name and help dismantle structures of oppression.
- Build on our work with Latine and rural ministries to broaden the pipeline of potential students to include and welcome those from many different communities and backgrounds.
- Build deeper, broader, and more creative partnerships with communities in Iowa and beyond, in our supporting synods, in congregations, with young adults, and with people around the world.

Care: We will care for the resources we have.

We will:

- Exercise good stewardship of our existing financial resources and expand and increase our funding sources to support the Seminary's mission.
- Care for our staff, faculty, and students.
- Ensure continuity, capacity, and competent leadership in key functions.
- Care for our physical facilities and creation, the world God loves so much.

Communication: We will communicate our mission, values, and identity clearly.

We will:

- Be in intentional conversation with different communities and people and listen actively to learn about them, their cultures, and our own participation in systems of oppression.
- Engage deeply with all constituencies and communities to share who we are, where we are going, and what we hope to share about the liberating hope and joy of the gospel with the world and its peoples.
- Share the educational offerings and values of the Seminary community in language that is readily available, easily understandable, and welcoming in tone, including our residential offerings.



Climate Change Grant

GRANT SUPPORTS CLIMATE CHANGE AWARENESS AT WTS

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) is the world's largest non-government general science membership organization and the publisher of the Science family of journals.

On December 9, 2006, the AAAS Board of Directors asserted in a statement that "the scientific evidence is clear: global climate change caused by human activities is occurring now, and it is a growing threat to society." Clear evidence of climate change is based upon "accumulating data from across the globe" that reveals "a wide array of effects: rapidly melting glaciers, increases in extreme weather, rising sea levels, shifts in species ranges, and more."

In 2020, through the efforts of the Rev. Dr. Craig Nesson, WTS was awarded an AAAS Climate Change Grant. The educational offerings at Wartburg Theological Seminary were enhanced through the generosity of this grant. We extend our deep appreciation to the AAAS, especially its administrator and benefactor, for accepting our application to serve as a participant seminary in this project.

This grant supported the teaching of two courses at WTS, a public event of the rural ministry conference, and five mini-grant projects in the seminary community.

The first course, Ecojustice, included two instructors with expertise on climate change: Dr. Lisa Dahill and Dr. Larry Rasmussen, published scholars in the field. This course explored biblical, theological, ethical, and scientific perspectives that inform and analyze the contemporary crisis in creation, including the urgency of rectifying climate change. Because of the pandemic, this intensive course was held through digital technology on Zoom.

There were five course objectives:

- (1) To explore the biblical and theological foundations for a theology of creation ethics (practice of biblical and theological wisdom).
- (2) To become more deeply informed by science for the church's deliberation of ecojustice (practice of complex analysis).
- (3) To examine the theological and ethical responsibilities facing the church in advocating for the integrity of creation in local places (practice of personal faith and integrity).
- (4) To participate in worship and devotions that accent our interdependence with creation (practice of missio Dei in Word and Sacrament).
- (5) To claim one's own theological voice in articulating an ethics of creation (practice of pastoral concern).



The second course, Being Body of Christ (required of all second-year students), included a special focus on the challenges of climate change thanks to the grant. The readings and speakers engaged the class in matters related to advocating for earth, sky, waters, and all creatures under threat in this era of the Anthropocene. Students were required to read two texts (Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Christology: Kenosis, Climate Change, and Befriending Nature* and Bill McKibben, *Falter: Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out?*). Four group projects each were based on additional readings (Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love*, Kiara A. Jorgenson and Alan G. Padgett, editors, *Ecotheology: A Christian Conversation*, and James B. Martin-Schramm, *Climate Justice: Ethics, Energy and Public Policy*). In addition, four speakers made presentations on climate change from their different perspectives in plenary sessions: Dr. Frederick Ware, Dr. Jessica Moerman, Dr. James Martin-Schramm, and Dr. Larry Rasmussen.

WTS student Kathy Cartwright participated in both classes and shared: "I found the focus on climate change within the Ecojustice and Being Body of Christ

courses to be very enlightening. Within our media, we hear about the quarrels on the larger-scope investments that countries are committing toward the climate crisis, but there are smaller-scale things we can all dedicate focus to as well. Both courses provided great resources and ways we, as future leaders of the church, can guide our churches, our communities, and our own families toward incorporating practices in our daily lives that would have a significant impact on slowing the climate crisis. The student presentations and group book study within these courses were a testament to God's intricate detail and love in creation, and how we are in relationship with all living things on earth. God created all living things to have qualities of sustainability through reproduction and renewal, and we are to be good stewards of God's beautiful creation. I think of it as every living thing being our neighbors, and we know we are to love our neighbors, even those nasty mosquitoes."

The Rural Ministry Conference, held March 6–8, 2022, was focused on the theme: "Creation Stewardship and Ministry in a Time of Climate Change." The event description read: "Climate change is impacting our world, especially rural areas, in many different ways. This conference will explore climate change's impacts in rural America as well as how often rural areas become victims to injustice in how climate and creation stewardship are addressed in the United States." Grounded in biblical and theological understandings, the emphasis was on practical ways for rural congregations, leaders, and communities to think about creation stewardship in a time of climate change.

The event schedule included two keynote presentations by the Rev. Melanie Mullen of the Episcopal Church USA on the themes "How to Discuss Climate Change in the Church," and "Practical Steps for Communities in Addressing Climate Change." The other keynote was by Matt Russell of Iowa Interfaith Power and Light on "Creation Stewardship in Rural America in a Time of Climate Change." Craig Nesson led two Bible studies: "Love Your People, Love Your Place" on Genesis 1:24–31, and "Eden Beckons" on Genesis 2:4b–15 and Revelation 22:1–5. These studies have now been published in the journal *Currents in Theology and Mission*. The publication also includes an appendix on "Local Congregations Anticipating Eden: 63 Practices" that was compiled in relation to the Ecojustice course.

The four workshops at the Rural Ministry Conference also related to climate change: "Empowering Rural Pastors to Lead Climate Action Community Dialogues," "Adding Season of Creation to your Liturgical Calendar," "Cultivating Hope Amidst a Groaning Creation," and "Climate Injustice in Rural Areas."

Finally, students, staff, and faculty members were supported in completing five eco-projects within the WTS community. These included:

(1) Seed packets for native wildlife pollination. Seed packets were purchased and distributed for native wildflowers that support pollinators like bees and butterflies. The Sustainability Taskforce then invited people to plant these seeds and be intentional about supporting pollinators. Live plants were also provided for the campus community.

(2) Education about a theology of food. A bread-baking workshop was held for the seminary community. WTS supported book reviewers for titles related to food theology, and Deacon Kellie Lisi and Rev. Dr. Martin Lohrmann taught a course on food theology. Next, they will lead a workshop on food theology at the 2023 Rostered Ministers Gathering of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

(3) Teaching materials on regenerative agriculture and climate change. This workshop supported a faculty member developing teaching material related to regenerative agriculture, including for a course on Rural Ecosystems and Ministry. Regenerative agriculture is an old concept that has taken on new importance in response to the impacts of climate change.

(4) Food waste recycling at the seminary. Food waste bins were assigned to housing units and instructions for their use provided to those residents. Laminated sheets with instructions for composting and food waste recycling were placed on display in the residential units. Food waste bins were well received, and residents with bins took part in food waste composting. Some residents in duplexes also participated by placing their food waste in bins when space was available.

(5) A presentation on eco-wonders in the Pacific Northwest was held as part of the Rural Ministry Conference and led by one of the Ecojustice students.

Speaking of this grant and all that resulted from it, Nesson says: "Climate system change as an ethical issue intersects with every other challenge facing the church and society. We need church leaders who can interpret and teach about ecojustice in compelling ways in congregations. This begins when we include future generations in every ethical deliberation. This grant helped address this with WTS students and alumni."

A Path to Belonging: Overcoming Clergy Loneliness

AN INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR MARY KAY DUCHENE

Loneliness, or the emotion of not having the relationships you want and need, is an epidemic among people in America. Studies have shown that half of Americans are lonely. Although some may assume that clergy have a strong built-in community, this is not often the case. According to leadership development consultants Mary Kay DuChene and Mark Sundby, clergy are as lonely as the general population.

This past year, recent graduates participating in the InTrust formation pilot project read DuChene's book and participated in a Zoom call with her.



Your book starts by identifying loneliness as an epidemic. What is the most important thing for clergy to know about loneliness?

Clergy score differently from the general population in one particular area of loneliness, and that is in the sense of isolation. Clergy feel more isolated than the general population. And isolation is defined as physical separation and an inability to connect with others. In some cases, isolation comes from clergy going where their calls are. Clergy might move where they don't know anybody, where their family and friends are not. They may move to locations where the culture is quite different from the culture they're used to—a person from the city moving to the country, or vice versa. Those things contribute to these feelings of isolation. Then there's the careful boundaries that we put around relationships. As a result

of those careful boundaries, clergy may not feel as though they have any meaningful relationships in their community. Those are some of the major contributing factors to the sense of isolation that clergy can feel that are more severe than the general population.

What stands out to you as you think about conversations you are having with leaders and clergy about loneliness?

I think loneliness is a taboo subject—people don't want to talk about it or admit to feeling lonely. There's shame associated with it. And so, when we do end up being in spaces where we are talking about it, I think people are grateful that it's being named and learning that they're not alone. Just letting people know you are actually not alone in your loneliness, that it's really natural, is important. Loneliness is a biological response that tells you to reach out and connect—that you're feeling socially distant or isolated. Social connection is the number one thing that clergy can do for resilience anyway. A resilient leader will feel less lonely because they will reach out to make social connections.

How does loneliness compare with other challenges that clergy might experience?

Ministry is really hard! There are so many facets to ministry. Pastors must be so skilled in so many areas; ministry is just really challenging. So we can feel like we don't know what we're doing, we can experience imposter syndrome, we can feel like failures, and when that happens, we disconnect. We don't want to talk about it, we don't want to tell anybody,



Photo Credit: Chuck Shingledecker '22

and it starts this downward spiral of isolation and loneliness. When we feel lonely, we tend to self-isolate which then causes us to feel more lonely. It's this downward spiral.

You can start reversing that spiral by doing simple things. Taking a walk and smiling at people who pass you by is proven to get those endorphins in our bodies firing and can make you feel more connected to your community. Making eye contact, volunteering, these are really simple ways to stop that downward spiral and begin to reverse it. Even if you still don't feel like you can reach out to anybody, there are simple things you can do to combat that loneliness.

How might seminary students be better prepared for the reality of loneliness in their call?

Just knowing you're going to experience loneliness normalizes it, because it is normal, especially for clergy. I think we make the assumption that we have built-in community because we're going to go be part of a church, but that's a mistaken assumption. Know you are going to experience times of loneliness in your ministry and that it's normal. If you can, create for yourself a personal action plan that says: when I feel lonely, here's what I'm going to do—here's my short list of people I'm going to call and say, "I'm feeling lonely." There was recently a *New York Times* article about the benefit of an eight-minute phone call and how in eight minutes, with intentionality, you can really build relationship. So, think about making an eight-minute phone call.

To recap, normalizing loneliness, understanding it's going to happen, and having a personal action plan would be helpful to seminary students. Hang on to your networks. Hang on to those seminary relationships even after you have spread out all over the United States. Keep those relationships going.

What are you hopeful about?

Simply having the conversation gives me hope. What's so tragic is when people feel lonely but don't reach out, and then feel lonelier as a result. If we can have the conversation, we stand the chance of mitigating that loneliness.

What is your advice for new graduates?

Stay connected to your seminary classmates, have a personal action plan, understand that loneliness is normal, identify what social network you can create, and intentionally create it.

Spiritual practice is also a really important combatant to loneliness. When we are personally connected to God, that can help us feel less lonely. As we go into our first calls, spiritual practice and Bible study become what we do in the course of our jobs as opposed to what we do to fill our souls. So even when you're digging into a text for sermon preparation, also be sure you're doing your own daily spiritual practice or regular spiritual practice so that you have that bucket that you're filling for yourself.

Getting to Know Mike Johnson

WELCOMING THE NEW VICE PRESIDENT OF DEVELOPMENT



In my free time I enjoy running, but I've been running too long to run anymore (if you know, you know!), so I basically do anything active: swim, bike, cross-country ski in the winter. Any day I can be active outdoors is a good day.

HOW DID YOUR FUNDRAISING CAREER BEGIN?

I was a private mortgage banker during the mortgage meltdown and our team was going to be disbanded. Instead of just going back to some other aspect of banking, I did a six-month executive coaching process to figure out "what I want to do when I grow up." I made a connection with someone who worked at Luther Seminary, and he said, "We're looking for someone with your banking background." And so, I started at Luther Seminary as a Philanthropic Advisor and Planned Giving Specialist, and that really gave me a vision of what I wanted to do.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO MOST ABOUT WORKING AT WARTBURG?

To be a part of training our future church leaders is such an important job and I am so honored to have a part to play in that. I'm also looking forward to really building relationships with people who are making a difference.

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU'D LIKE THE WARTBURG COMMUNITY TO KNOW ABOUT YOU?

I ran 12 marathons in 2012 to raise money for Camp Wapagasset. My first marathon of the year qualified me for Boston in April of 2013. I called that my "Bakers Dozen." I finished all twelve but didn't finish Boston, that was the year the bombs went off and they stopped me with less than a mile to go.

WOULD YOU TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOURSELF?

I have been married for 33 years and I have three daughters, the oldest of whom is getting married this fall. My wife works at our church, Trinity Lutheran in Stillwater, MN, as well as working as an adjunct professor at Luther College and operating a spiritual direction practice.

Before joining Wartburg I served for more than 10 years with Lutheran World Relief. Before that I was the Director of Development at Lake Wapogasset Lutheran Bible Camp (Camp Wapo) in Amery, WI, and before that I was at Luther Seminary.

I'm currently a member of the St. Paul Area Synod Bega Kwa Bega Iringa Tanzania Task Force. I will be leading a trip to Tanzania this October.

Gifts of Grain

A UNIQUE WAY TO MAKE A CHARITABLE GIFT

Did you know you can give a gift of grain to Wartburg Theological Seminary (WTS)? It can be a wonderful way for farmers to invest in the future of the church while simultaneously achieving tax savings. WTS donor Marvin Koester of Deshler, NE, has farmed for nearly 70 years and supports Wartburg through gifts of grain. He says, "My son Timothy graduated from Wartburg, so I'm happy to support the seminary. Giving a gift of grain is just another way I can support Wartburg, and it provides some tax advantages to me." Koester added: "It's important that we support the organizations that spread the message of Jesus Christ, and even more so the ones that train people to go out and spread the message."

What Are the Benefits?

There are several distinct advantages for donors to use grain when making a gift to WTS instead of contributing cash. The commodity (corn, beans, etc.) becomes an asset of WTS, so when it's sold, the value of the contributed grain is not reported as income by the farmer. Typically, the farmer can still claim a deduction for the production costs of the gifted commodity as a farm business expense. This gifting strategy allows the farmer to reduce their federal income tax, self-employment tax, and state income tax.

How to Make a Gift of Grain

1. Consult with your tax or financial advisor.
2. Contact the WTS Development Office at 563-589-0221 to ensure the proper steps are taken for your gift of grain.
3. Deliver the grain to your local elevator or co-op and tell them that you wish to transfer ownership to WTS.
4. Request a grain storage receipt showing WTS as the owner. The elevator should refrain from selling the grain or issuing a check without specific instructions from WTS.
5. Notify the WTS Development Office (563-589-0221) when the transfer is made, indicating where the grain is being stored.
6. WTS will then order the sale of the grain.
7. WTS will acknowledge your gift following the sale.

If you have questions about other types of unusual assets, real estate, or commodities that you might like to donate, please reach out to our development team.



Faculty & Staff Updates



Susan Ebertz, Director for the Reu Memorial Library & Associate Professor of Bibliography & Academic Research, retired at the end of June and was granted Emerita status. She presented at three sessions at the Atla Annual Conference in June: a panel, "Best Practices for Virtual Library Services for

Small Libraries"; a panel, "Starting Off Well: Advice for New Theological Librarians"; and a workshop, "Relationships, Relationships, Relationships: Connecting through Atla." In retirement Ebertz will be coordinating the library move back to Fritschel Hall this summer.



Dr. Beth Elness-Hanson, Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible, wrapped up a cherished year of teaching Hebrew Bible. She will continue as affiliated faculty on an extended unpaid leave of absence as she moves to Tanzania. In August, she begins her Marie Skłodowska-Curie post-doctoral

fellowship on biblical ecotheology, funded by the European Commission. Her spring presentations were: "Curses and Blessings! What Do These Old Testament Concepts Have to Do with Life Today?" for the Alumni ReFormation and Reunion gathering and "Building Bridges Between Different Ways of Knowing for Climate Change Mitigation in Maasailand" at the International Rural Churches Association quadrennial conference in Dubuque. Her collaborations at VID Specialized University, Norway, include co-chairing bimonthly webinars for the "Colloquium on Epistemology, Context, and Text in African Biblical Studies" research group, supervising an Ethiopian Ph.D. student to dissertation submission, and coordinating/teaching a Ph.D. course on African biblical and theological hermeneutics.



Rev. Dr. Nathan C.P. Frambach, Professor of Pastoral Theology, led a group of 19 travelers this past January on a Winter Sojourn to Holden Village (overall his seventh J-term trip to Holden). More recently he represented Wartburg Seminary at the Central/

Southern Illinois Synod Assembly June 1-3 in Peoria, IL. Nate concluded his service as the Interim Academic Dean on June 30 and began a season of sabbatical on July 1, returning to teach in January 2024.



Rev. Dr. Sam Giere, Professor of Biblical Interpretation, presented "The Promise of the Reconciled Imagination" at the ELCA Rostered Ministers Gathering in Phoenix, Arizona, in July 2023, based on his book *Freedom and Imagination: Trusting Christ in an Age of Bad Faith* (Fortress, 2023). He is also

humbled and chuffed to be entrusted with the office of pipe major of the Dubuque Fire Pipes & Drums as of March 2023.



Dr. Samantha Gilmore, Assistant Professor of Homiletics, wrote a "Between Text and Sermon" essay on John 10:1-10 for an upcoming issue of *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*. She contributed to the "Preaching Helps" section of the upcoming issue of *Currents in Theology*

and Mission. This summer, she will be traveling to the Wabash Center for a week as part of the 2023 Hybrid Teaching and Learning Workshop for Early Career Theological School Faculty.



Rev. Dr. Kristin Johnston Largent, President, preached at the Baccalaureate service and received an Honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kansas.



Rev. Dr. Martin Lohrmann, Associate Professor of Lutheran Confessions and Heritage, contributed articles to recent issues of *Currents in Theology and Mission*. The first offered insights from the Reformation about how Lutherans might engage the new challenges and opportunities of online worship. The

second—in an issue honoring the life and work of Dr. Gwen Saylor—was entitled "A Table Talk of Terror: Luther, Parental Discipline, and Family History."



Rev. Dr. Craig Nesson, Professor of Contextual Theology and Ethics and The William D. Streng Professor for the Education and Renewal of the Church, was issue editor for "Embodying the Questions: Remembering, Celebrating, and Building Upon the Life and

Teaching of the Rev. Dr. Gwen B. Sayler," *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 50.2 (April 2023). He published two Bible studies on climate change: "Love Your People, Love Your Place" and "Eden Beckons" with Appendix on "Local Congregations Anticipating Eden: 63 Practices" in *Currents in Theology and Mission* (April 2023).

He published "Diaconate of All Believers: Theology, Formation, Practice" in a special spring 2023 issue of *Religions* with the theme "Diaconia and Christian Social Practice in Global Perspective" (www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/14/6/741).

He also gave a presentation on "The Diaconate of All Believers: Seeking Justice in the Everyday" for the Research in Diaconia and Christian Social Practice Conference: Contested Spaces of Diaconia—Seeking Justice, Safety and Well-Being in Oslo, Norway.



Rev. Dr. Winston D. Persaud, Professor of Systematic Theology, Holder of the Kent S. Knutson and UELC Chair in Theology and Mission, and Director of the Center for Global Theologies—in tribute to the late Professor Gwendolyn Beth Sayler, Ph.D.—published "Theological Non-Negotiables in Martin Luther's Hymns for Confessing Jesus Christ in the Twenty-First Century" in *Currents in Theology and Mission*,

April 2023. Dr. Persaud will contribute a chapter, "Lutheran Theology Addresses Child Abuse and Child Protection," for a multi-authored volume. He served as guest preacher on June 18, 2023 for the House of Hope LC in New Hope, MN. He will make his annual visit to Guyana in July–August, where he will be preaching in congregations and teaching pastors/deacons/lay leaders in the mode of competency-based theological education (CBTE).



Rev. Dr. Troy Troftgruben, Associate Professor of New Testament and The William A. & John E. Wagner Professor in Biblical Theology, published "Reading Scripture as Good News for All" (*Currents in Theology & Mission*, Spring 2023); an article on Greek discovered in the old faculty lounge during the renovation (*LifeTogether*, Spring 2023); and contributions to *Sundays and Seasons: Preaching, Year B 2024*. This spring he served as keynote Bible study leader

at the Western Iowa Synod Assembly, taught three sessions on the New Testament at Trinity Lutheran Church in Emmetsburg, IA, and led an adult education forum at St. Peter Lutheran Church in Dubuque. This spring semester Troy shared in teaching two preaching courses with Dr. Samantha Gilmore. This summer he is working on a book project on bearing witness as a theme in Acts with an eye to ministry today.



Dr. Man-Hei Yip, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, presented her paper titled, "The New Diaspora and Theological Imagination in the Age of Rising Authoritarianism," at ReFormation and Reunion, 2023. She was also invited to give a lecture on the Augsburg Confession for the Asian Lutheran Evangelism Program, facilitated by the Sierra Pacific Synod. Professor Yip will attend a two-week workshop at the University of Birmingham, UK, this summer, as she was chosen to be one of the fellows for the Psychology Cross-Training Fellowship Programme for Theologians.



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Upcoming Events

September 4, 2023

Opening Worship for the 170th Academic Year

Friday, October 13, 2023

President's Dinner

Saturday, October 28, 2023

Considering Your Call Saturday

Friday, March 15–Sunday March 17, 2024

Considering Your Call Weekend

April 2–4, 2024

ReFormation & Reunion



For more information and to register,
visit wartburgseminary.edu
or use the QR code above.



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