



Joint report to synods from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago & Wartburg Theological Seminary

Dear Partners in Ministry in the Central/Southern Illinois Synod,

We know that you seek out and value excellent leaders for your ministries. Wartburg Theological Seminary (WTS) and the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC), the two seminaries that you support, are dedicated to forming such leaders. This report reflects the spirit of collaboration between our schools and highlights the benefits of the distinctive ways we form leaders.

Together, LSTC and WTS have been learning from and working with Latinx/Hispanic leaders in Arkansas/Oklahoma and the Texas synods since early 2017 on ways to provide theological education for Spanish speaking communities. In 2018, leaders within the synods completed the first pilot programs that they developed in partnership with the seminaries to continue this work of developing theological education and identifying new rostered leaders.

### **Distinct ways LSTC and WTS serve church and world**

The distinctiveness of our locations and programs mean that those following their call to leadership in the church can find the best fit for their circumstances and passions.

LSTC is a community that forms leaders to form communities. This emphasis is part of LSTC's innovative public church curriculum. Since we are the ELCA seminary with the highest proportion of residential students, they are able to take advantage of all of the resources and learning opportunities the Chicago area has to offer. Students embrace the joys and challenges of being in a diverse community knowing that it strengthens their capacity to lead in a variety of ministry settings. In 2018 LSTC strengthened its mission by

- Hiring three new faculty members in essential areas: Dr. Eunyung Lim, associate professor of New Testament; Dr. Kimberly Wagner, associate professor of homiletics; and Dr. Marvin Wickware Jr., associate professor of church and society and ethics. Each has a reputation for excellence in teaching and scholarship, and stands at the beginning of a very promising career.
- Hiring Andrea Finnegan as Vice President for Finance and Clyde Andrew Walter as interim Vice President for advancement. They are leading us in new directions and inspiring confidence in these critical areas of operation.
- Creating a new full-time faculty position, Director of Contextual Education to focus attention on the formation of master's students in collaboration with congregations, local communities, synods, and faith-based organizations.
- Awarding 24 Public Church Fellowships to master's level students who work an average of seven hours a week in 14 local nonprofit agencies. Fellows receive a monthly stipend and reflect together on faith formation and service.

With deep roots, WTS explores new ways of preparing leaders for a changing world. Investments in digital teaching and learning partnered with a commitment to building strong programs – both traditional and new – have contributed to several years of growth at WTS. Students (both residential and distance) learn from a teaching-centered, relational faculty to be formed as faithful leaders for our church. With the growth of new and expanded learning models, students in Dubuque learn alongside students from all four corners of the United States (and everywhere in between). The broad contexts each student in the WTS community brings has enriched and grown the capacity for

pastoral formation through the exchange of learning, sharing, and action-reflection practiced throughout the curriculum. WTS has much to celebrate with you, our partners in ministry, as we look toward the rest of 2019:

- Two consecutive years of significant enrollment growth.
- Largest Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) program in the ELCA, training even more leaders for ordained ministry.
- Doubled the number of students in our Collaborative Learning (serving in a congregation and learning in real-time from a distance for the entirety of the degree program) Program and expansion of the program to include Master of Arts in Diaconal Ministry students.
- First students entered in the Integrated Bachelor of Arts/Master of Divinity Degree Program in partnership with Wartburg College.
- Redesigned Master of Arts and Master of Arts in Diaconal Ministry Degrees to meet the needs of new audiences of students.
- Significantly increased scholarships available to students, combined with a 61% decrease in student borrowing since 2015.

### Alumni stories

Finally, we'd like to introduce you to just one alumna from each of our seminaries.



Minna Bothwell, Wartburg Seminary '14 graduate, has been named one of the Des Moines Register's "People to Watch in 2019." Minna is serving in her first call at Capitol Hill Lutheran Church in Des Moines and has solidified a space in her community as an administer of the gospel for those in need, especially LBGTQ+ people, and immigrant and refugee communities. All of this starts at church, where Minna practices relentless hospitality in the name of Jesus Christ to all who enter.



Fatima Bass Thomas is a leader in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Gambia (ELCG). She is using what she learned at LSTC to help empower women in the Gambia and Guinea Bissau. "They are using the Scripture to block women. I want to bring back all I learned at LSTC (about) those Bible passages. . .that this is not the whole message of those passages." Because she speaks the local language, Bass Thomas is now serving churches in Guinea Bissau, teaching baptizing and presiding to hundreds of new Christians.

We invite you and members of your congregation to visit our seminaries and participate in worship, attend educational events, discern a call to ministry or visit with some of the future leaders that you and your synod support through your gifts to Wartburg and LSTC. To learn more about your seminaries and the innovative and distinctive ways we are forming leaders, please visit [www.lstc.edu](http://www.lstc.edu) and [www.wartburgseminary.edu](http://www.wartburgseminary.edu).

Your partnership is essential for LSTC and Wartburg to continue our shared mission of providing effective theological education. Thank you for joining us in developing leaders for the many ministries of your congregation, synod, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Nieman".

James Nieman  
President  
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Louise N. Johnson".

Louise N. Johnson  
President  
Wartburg Theological Seminary