



## 2016 Report to the Central/Southern Illinois Synod Assembly

Dear Friends,

We give thanks for the many gifts that you, the people of the Central/Southern Illinois Synod, send to the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago (LSTC) and Wartburg Theological Seminary (WTS). We couldn't carry out our mission without

- the ***financial support you offer*** as individuals, congregations, and synods. Your support is the foundation for the economy of leadership formation in the ELCA.
- the ***people you encourage who may become seminary students***. By saying to someone, "Have you considered a call to ministry? I think you have the gifts," you plant the seed of discernment. Seminaries rely on you to identify those gifts among people in your congregations and your family and friends.
- your ***prayers and care for your seminaries and their students***. You encourage and inspire us in the work of forming leaders who are well-prepared to inspire others in living out their faith.

The **Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago** continues to fulfill its mission of forming visionary leaders to bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ by:

- Sending out 58 students from six degree programs at the May 2015 Commencement. Half of our Master of Divinity graduates were in a call process or had a call in hand as of Commencement, and nearly all are now ordained or consecrated and serving in ministries across the country.
- Awarding over 40 full-tuition scholarships to new and returning master of divinity students and providing scores of other partial-tuition scholarships to students in every year of their studies. Thanks to this financial assistance and financial counseling, the total amount of student loans decreased by 25% compared to last year, its lowest level in 13 years.
- Welcoming Rev. Jan Rippentrop as the Axel Jacob and Gerda Maria (Swanson) Carlson Chair in Homiletics and the Director of MA Programs to the faculty.
- Welcoming Rev. Dr. Harvard Stephens Jr. as the Pastor to the Community and Dean of the Chapel.
- Having its curriculum, focused on "Preparing Leaders for a Public Church," named as one of the most innovative programs in theological education in North America by Convergence US and featured at the Reimagining Theological Education conference held in fall 2015.
- Launching the Public Church Fellows Program, providing stipends for five master of divinity students who combine academics, community service in a Chicago area nonprofit organization, and spiritual reflection.
- Bringing together delegations from the eight ELCA seminaries to explore and rethink the future of theological education through a shared "Learning Exchange" – an online way to share teaching and learning among the seminaries and more broadly across our church (a project being funded by the Dean and Rosemarie Buntrock Foundation).

**Wartburg Theological Seminary** continues to live out its mission of forming valued leaders for God's mission by:

- Sending out 46 graduates to serve in congregations and ministries. As early as July more than 75% of students were transitioning to their first call. The rapid move into calls points to the quality of our graduates and the church's increasing need for pastors and other leaders.
- Welcoming The Rev. Louise Johnson as Wartburg Theological Seminary's 14<sup>th</sup> President. President Johnson began her position in June and was officially installed as President on December 4, 2015. Johnson is a 1999 graduate of Wartburg Seminary.
- Welcoming the Rev. Mark Yackel-Juleen as the Director for Small Town and Rural Ministry. Building on Wartburg's long-time connections in rural ministry, Yackel-Juleen seeks to strengthen and further develop Wartburg's Center for Theology and Land to be a vibrant source of research and resources for individuals and congregations.
- Offering a growing Distributed Learning degree program. This program combines online coursework and required on-campus intensive courses. The Distributed Learning program allows more students to begin their theological training without relocation, thereby reaching a more diverse set of individuals seeking a call to public ministry.
- Meeting the needs of diverse ministry contexts by providing a summer Spanish language intensive, a Master of Divinity Hispanic Ministry Summer Term, TEEM programming (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries) as well as a certificate in Hispanic Ministry at LSPS (Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest) in Austin, TX.
- Providing 100% of eligible students with seminary financial support for their education. Wartburg also continues to be efficient and consistently has the second or third lowest cost per student among the ELCA seminaries with the debt levels of students also among the lowest.

We invite you and members of your congregation to visit our seminaries and attend worship, participate in a continuing education event, discern a call to ministry, or visit with some of the future leaders that you and your synod support through your gifts to the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and to Wartburg Theological Seminary. To learn more about the seminaries, their faculty, programs and upcoming events, 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 their shared mission of providing dynamic theological education for present and future leaders of your congregations and ministries in your synod, for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and to the glory of God.

Yours in Christ,



President James Nieman  
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago



President Louise N. Johnson  
Wartburg Theological Seminary