



Lutheran School of
Theology at Chicago



Joint report to synods from LSTC & Wartburg Theological Seminary

Dear Partners in Ministry in the Arkansas-Oklahoma 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 the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod supports, is 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.

Of all ELCA students enrolled in our church's seven seminaries, 29% of them attend LSTC or WTS. In fall 2017, Wartburg saw a 77% increase in enrollment in the first year class over the previous year, with many of those students enrolled in the distributive learning program. The two schools have over 150 students who hail from our 18 supporting synods in Regions 4 and 5.

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 located in a bustling, racially and ethnically diverse neighborhood on the south side of Chicago. As the ELCA seminary with the highest percentage of residential students, students are able to take advantage of all of the resources and learning opportunities the Chicago area has to offer. LSTC's new strategic plan for 2018-2020 focuses the school on being a community that forms leaders to form communities. In a time of deep polarization in our society, we believe that Christian leaders will play a crucial role in bringing people together. This emphasis is part of LSTC's innovative public church curriculum.

Wartburg Seminary has been forming leaders for over 160 years. Our deep roots allow us to be nimble and explore new ways of preparing people to lead. Although the central location is a castle in Dubuque, Iowa, the technology within these stone walls is far from ancient. In classrooms equipped with newly updated video technology, students from Florida, Colorado, Iowa, Texas, and around the country learn together in real-time. This allows students in our Master of Divinity – Collaborative Learning (CL) program to serve in a congregation or other ministry all four years while learning via video technology. With this program and the help of our partners, we are able to address nearly every education expense a student faces in considering seminary – housing, insurance, tuition, and fees.

Whether face-to-face or online, outstanding faculty and staff at our seminaries form leaders in critical ways.

Gordon Straw, Cornelsen Chair for Spiritual Formation and Coordinator of Candidacy at LSTC, draws on his Native American roots to communicate to his students that spiritual formation is about how we live our lives every day, and that how we live honors God, those around us, and

ourselves. We are formed through life experience, he says, as much as through traditional spiritual practices.

Lindsey Queener, WTS Director for Admissions joined the team in early 2018. She said, "When I joined the Lutheran church, our congregation used to pray this prayer: 'Bring to this church those who will be nourished here, and those who will nourish us.' That prayer is my prayer as I begin my work on the WTS Admissions team; that this next generation of leaders will be formed in all kinds of new ways, and we too will be formed in all kinds of new ways by them."

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



JustChurch is the name of an ELCA Saturday evening worship service supported by Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Iowa City, Iowa. "We offer gritty preaching, engaging those uncomfortable, authentic and exhilarating places where the world intersects the kingdom of heaven, those same places where God calls us to be. *Just church*," Rev. Sarah Goettsch, WTS '01 explains. "We commend it to those who find themselves disenfranchised from organized church, who feel harmed or skeptical towards denominational religion, who are seeking to worship, but not necessarily join."



While a youth director, Kara Baylor was called on to preach when the pastor was ill. That sermon must have gone well, because after that Sunday she had plenty of people urge her to consider seminary. The idea wasn't new to her, of course, but it made her seriously consider it. "The call of the community to leadership is very important to me," said Baylor, who graduated from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago in 2000. She is now campus pastor at Carthage College in Kenosha, Wis., where she "loves the opportunity to be on the faith journey with students, faculty and staff. The college environment is a place where we are supposed to ask big questions and do it within community. It is a great place to help constructive conversation take place."

We invite you and members of your congregation to visit our seminaries to participate in worship, attend 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 Wartburg and the LSTC. To learn more about your seminaries and the innovative and distinctive ways that we are forming leaders, please visit www.lstc.edu and www.wartburgseminary.edu.

Your partnership is essential for LSTC and Wartburg to continue our shared mission of providing effective theological education and 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