

LTS Forums: A Summary of the Conversation

During the October 5-9 week, Lutheran Theological Seminary hosted two online forums with bishops, pastors, deacons, and lay people from across the Western Canadian synods. The forums offered an opportunity to talk about LTS's decision to pursue a single institution with St. Andrew's College and what this means for Lutheran theological education and formation. **This summary reflects what we discussed in the forums, while recognizing that some details of the new institution are still taking shape.**

President Bill Harrison framed the conversation around three themes: our continuing Lutheran commitments, our hope for the future, and the reasons institutional change is necessary.

A central message throughout both forums was that **the Boards of LTS and St. Andrew's College have decided to pursue a single institution because we believe it offers the strongest future for our educational missions. The details of that institution are now being developed, while Lutheran identity and formation remain firm commitments.**

Questions explored Lutheran representation and leadership, faculty, governance, accreditation, recruitment, theology, the relationship with the ELCIC, and the changing shape of the Saskatoon Theological Union.

Our Lutheran commitments

Rev. Dr. William Harrison began by returning to the mission of LTS and its relationship with the ELCIC in Western Canada.

That work includes preparing pastors and deacons for ministry, supporting lay leadership and continuing education, teaching across Western Canada, participating in the life of synods, and contributing to the wider theological and educational work of the church.

These commitments are part of what the new structure is intended to sustain.

President Harrison described several ways Lutheran theological education is being built into the developing model. These include formal commitments to Lutheran theological formation, Lutheran participation in governance, a proposed Director of Lutheran Theological Studies, and continued support for Lutheran faculty positions and students.

Some details, including the eventual composition of the board and other governance arrangements, are still being developed. The commitment to a continuing Lutheran presence, however, is clear.

Why pursue a single institution?

A number of questions focused on why LTS and St. Andrew's College believe a new institutional structure is necessary.

President Harrison spoke candidly about the realities facing small theological schools. LTS and St. Andrew's College already share much of their academic life, but continue to carry many of the administrative, governance, reporting, and accreditation responsibilities of separate institutions.

The move toward one institution is intended to reduce that duplication and create a structure better suited to the scale of the schools and the work they are being asked to do.

President Harrison emphasized that the goal is not simply administrative efficiency. A shared institution should allow more attention and energy to be directed toward theological education, denominational formation, students, churches, faculty, and ministry.

He also spoke about the value of deepening the relationship between the Lutheran and United Church traditions. The two traditions bring distinct theological perspectives and practices to the shared work. The intention is not to erase those differences, but to create a structure in which each tradition can contribute clearly and confidently.

Faculty, programs, and Lutheran formation

Participants asked what the changes could mean for faculty and academic programs.

Current LTS faculty are expected to continue their work within the developing institution. President Harrison also spoke about the importance of ensuring a strong Lutheran voice when future faculty members serving Lutheran theological education are appointed.

The emerging model envisions shared faculty and administration alongside identifiable denominational formation. Lutheran students will continue to require formation rooted in the Lutheran tradition and connected to the life of the ELCIC.

The proposed Director of Lutheran Theological Studies would provide additional leadership and strengthen the connection between academic programs, Lutheran formation, students, and the wider church.

Governance and accreditation

Questions were also raised about governance and accreditation.

The developing institution is expected to have one governing board with meaningful representation from both Lutheran and United Church constituencies. The exact composition remains under discussion.

Accreditation is another significant part of the conversation. Maintaining two separate accredited institutions requires substantial administrative capacity. Moving toward one institution provides an opportunity for a more sustainable accreditation structure while continuing the academic and formational work currently being done.

Our relationships with Anglican partners

Participants also asked about the changed relationship with the College of Emmanuel & St. Chad.

President Harrison acknowledged the significance of the change and the loss of the former three-school structure. He also expressed gratitude for the long history of shared work through the Saskatoon Theological Union and a desire to continue constructive relationships with Anglican partners.

LTS and St. Andrew's College are now moving forward together in developing the new institutional model while continuing to value the ecumenical relationships that have shaped theological education in Saskatoon.

Hope for the future

Throughout both conversations, President Harrison returned to hope.

The churches we serve are changing, and theological education must respond to that changing context. At the same time, there continues to be important work for Lutheran theological education in Western Canada: preparing people for ordained and diaconal ministry, equipping lay leaders, supporting congregations and synods, and helping the church think theologically about its life and witness.

The new institution also offers an opportunity to strengthen relationships between Lutheran and United Church communities. By learning and working more closely together while remaining rooted in our own traditions, we can deepen mutual understanding and model the kind of ecumenical partnership already taking shape in many communities.

The institutional structure exists to serve that mission.

We are grateful to everyone who participated in these forums, and especially for the thoughtful and direct questions brought into the conversation.

We concluded each forum with prayer, entrusting this work, our schools, our churches, and the communities we serve to God.