

## Educating in New Ways

By Rev. Dr. Gordon Jensen

In the spring of 2013, LTS celebrated its one-hundredth anniversary. That year, the faculty boldly changed the way we had traditionally taught courses. For the first century, we had followed the university model, offering semester-long courses. This meant that all students had to move to LTS for four years of theological education. But these old ways were not working anymore. Students, especially second-career students, were no longer willing or able to uproot their families or leave jobs in order to move to Saskatoon. To attract students, and to incorporate new teaching methodologies that fit this new context, changes were made.

Most drastically, all the courses became one-and two-week intensives. These courses are taken on site at LTS, while the others can be taken in a 'live-streaming' format-where a student can actively participate in the class while at home. No longer do they have to move to Saskatoon to study. At the same time, internship, traditionally taken in the third year of the four-year degree program for those seeking to

become pastors, was lengthened to the last two years of the program, giving students more 'hands-on' experience. In this two-year internship, students continue to take a few one-week intensive courses that incorporate teaching and leadership activities into the internship site, rather than simply writing academic papers. This new model of education places emphasis on learning the theology, theory, and skills to be active, engaged pastors in a variety of ministry settings.

The new format also means changes for the faculty. Our first question, in setting up the course and the various assignments, is 'What do our students need to know, and what skills do they need, to be the best pastors possible?' That may mean not automatically assigning term papers or exams, but a variety of assignments, while still insisting on high academic standards. Each course becomes a very intense but satisfying immersion into the material. We have discovered that the students are now actually more engaged in their study. More 'out of classroom' learning takes place, and the overall level of discussion and debate has increased. It has been a positive change, and well worth the work it took to change to this new way of educating students in theology.

## The Impact of Change

By Elina Singh, current LTS student

*I am grateful for the recent changes at the Seminary. The intensive format works really well for me because I live in Vancouver, and I have a young child. It would have been impossible to move my family to Saskatoon. Because of the Challenge Scholarship, I am able to focus on studying full-time instead of stretching the course-work out over several years.*



LUTHERAN  
theological seminary  
SASKATOON

# WINTER NEWSLETTER

Lutheran Theological Seminary, a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, nurtures and challenges all people for Christ-centered leadership and witness for God's mission in the world.

## A New LTS: Taking Up The Challenge

By the Rev. Dr. William Harrison, President

God is calling into being a new LTS. We are responding to the challenge of today's church, using today's ways of teaching and forming students, and preparing them to communicate in ways that serve the needs of both long-time church members and the newly or potentially interested. We are redesigning every aspect of our operations, so that we can effectively use the resources that God provides to develop leaders who are up to the challenge of sharing the Good News of Christ Jesus with the world of today and tomorrow.

We are working with a truly contemporary model of education. Our students are on-site for two-week periods for many of their courses, one-week periods for some advanced classes, and connect to the classroom electronically or participate in on-line reading, discussion, and assignment work for others. We don't have students in residence for full terms or years, as we once did. The Rev. Dr. Gordon Jensen, our Academic Dean, explains our approach in this newsletter.

For us, this approach to education is a way to engage the resources of today's church in the formation of leaders, lay and rostered, for the church of today and tomorrow. We are a smaller seminary than we once were, just as the ELCIC is smaller. However, the intensive and distance course format allows us to engage teachers from across our synods. The Rev. Dr. Kayko Driedger Hesslein, an adjunct faculty member in Systematic Theology who is also a pastor in ABT Synod, tells us a bit about what a course looks like today.

For the students, this makes education possible when it might not be otherwise. Combined with our Challenge Scholarships, Terracon Scholarships, and other student funding, our new model is leading to a significant increase in enrollment. We have seen growth of nearly 50% in degree student numbers, this year over last year. Elina Singh, a



Today's classroom.

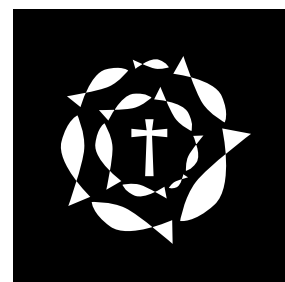
Challenge Scholarship-winning student from Vancouver, shares how our system benefits her.

Today's challenge for LTS is that our physical and organizational arrangements are out of sync with the education that we provide. We need to reorganize to support today's educational model. The time for us to do it is now, as we ride a wave of success. That's why I and the Board (see the article by Laureen Wray, Board Chair) are working together with the Seminary community on new possibilities for LTS.

The building that many of you have loved, shared, and supported over the past 50 years is now too large for us. At 30,000 sq. ft. and usually accommodating 15-30 people, it provides us with (and requires that we heat, maintain, and otherwise care for) 1,000-2,000 sq. ft. per person. This is expensive and environmentally unfriendly. Moreover, our students have only occasional need for residence space, easily met by other available facilities, and our mostly-empty 26,000 sq. ft. residence runs at a substantial cost to the Seminary. Our responsibility for these buildings takes me away from academic and leadership tasks, and requires us to commit extensive staff resources to the physical plant. Our buildings belong to a residential model of education that we no longer follow.

The Board and Seminary are committed to being FAR-sighted as

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Lutheran Theological Seminary

114 Seminary Crescent  
Saskatoon, SK S7N 0X3

phone: (306) 966-7846 email: [development.office@usask.ca](mailto:development.office@usask.ca)

[www.usask.ca/luther.com](http://www.usask.ca/luther.com)

Find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/LTSSaskatoon/](https://www.facebook.com/LTSSaskatoon/)

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we engage in the process of discernment. We are working to design a future that will offer us Financial, Academic, and Recruiting benefits. We are going to be a more focused institution, emphasizing preparing leaders for the church.

We will do this with strengthened partnerships, enabling us to share some aspects of our operations for greater efficiency and expand our educational resources and reach.

In order to consider all options, we have been reaching out to other Lutheran institutions, including Luther College at the University of Regina and Martin Luther University College in Waterloo, along with our Saskatoon Theological Union partners and schools within the University of Saskatchewan system here in Saskatoon. We are making an effort to be unconstrained in our thinking, welcoming God's lead and listening to the voices of God's people.

We believe that God has a strong and exciting future for your seminary. In various forms and locations, LTS and its predecessors have been serving Lutherans in Western Canada for over a century. Change has been an important part of our past; it will continue to be part of life in the future. The eternal God is faithful; we strive to be, also.

We ask for your prayers and your continued support as we find a new future. Together, we can take up the challenge!

Classroom from the professor's view, with Dr. Harrison.



Laureen Wray, Board chair.

## Discernment: The Board Responds to the Challenge

By Laureen Wray, Board of Governors Chair

The LTS Board has dedicated itself to intense reflection on what it means to be a small Lutheran Seminary serving the ELCIC and the larger church in Western Canada today. We are pleased to be working closely together with President Harrison in the critical task of discerning the future of LTS. We strive to meet the challenges of today while moving towards the future of our ministry. We hear God calling us to a new road, perhaps even a new direction where God may forge the path. It is exhilarating and challenging to consider new possibilities for our shared work of forming leaders. LTS is an important contributor to, and symbol of, the common ministry of the four western Synods. We welcome your contributions to this vital conversation. Our desire is that we may move into tomorrow together. Please pray for the Board as we put our best efforts into guiding LTS as God calls us forward.

## Advent Appeal Update

**Your** response to the Advent Matching Appeal was overwhelming, bringing our total with the matching gift to **\$90,792.94!!!!**

This helps to sustain our annual support, to provide excellent education, and to affirm a hopeful vision for the future. Thank you!



Dr. Kayko Driedger Hesslein, Adjunct Professor of Systematic Theology.

## Challenges and Possibilities

By Rev. Dr. Kayko Driedger Hesslein

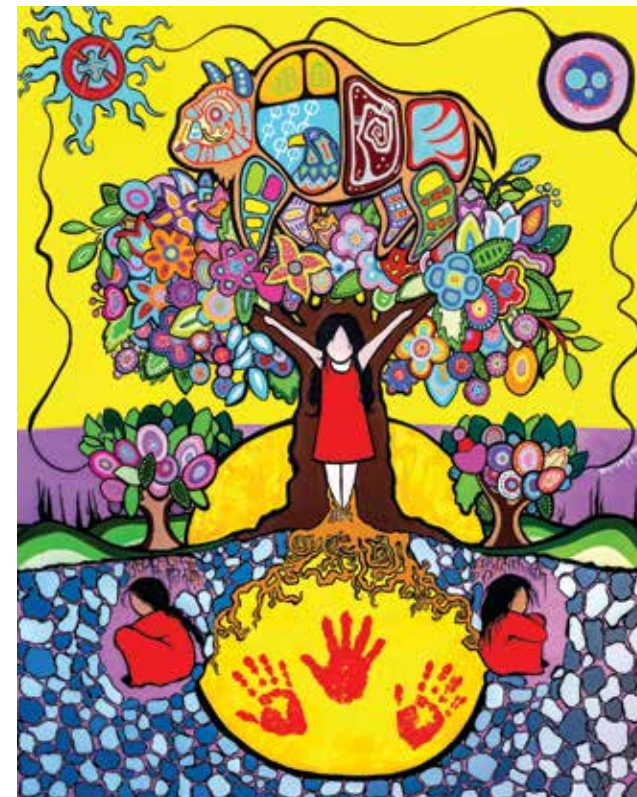
For the last fifty years, we have been living in an explosion of theological development. This makes teaching

theology more difficult, because there are so many more theologians to cover than there used to be. We also have new theological issues to grapple with, including Medical Assistance In Dying, religious pluralism, the expanding world of LGBTQ+ theologies, climate change, the future of the church, and even space travel. It is impossible to anticipate what theological issue will come up for our pastors in thirty years. In order to prepare students for this, I now spend a lot of time on how we think theologically (methodology), rather than what we think, which means these seminarians may have to Google the year the Nicene Creed was adopted (325/381), but they are ready to sit down with you and think through the implications of any (and I mean any!) real-life situation that impacts your faith.

But teaching theology to seminarians is not just about teaching content and theological thinking. These are the primary foundations of our theology courses, but just as important is learning how to communicate the ideas. Pastors live our vocations in the public sphere, and so we want to be able to effectively communicate our message of Good News through the various public modes of communication: sermons, one-on-one conversation, adult education, Sunday School, Confirmation classes, and, more recently, online venues like blogs or commenting forums.

Traditional pedagogy has focused first on written papers as the hallmark of academic success. Today, that focus is shifting, and so in my theology class, I require students to show that they are also learning how to communicate in shorter forms, both written and oral. Some of my classes have required students to develop online blogs, where they post in written form and also record short videos. They are also required to respond to one another and demonstrate both pastoral care and theological thinking in two sentence responses to someone else's post. It's not easy!

The future of theological education is an exciting one, full of challenges and possibilities, both for students and for professors. LTS seminarians are well-equipped to meet those challenges and to serve God's church.



## Study Conference 2019 BREAKING OPEN THE CHURCH

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Respect by Donna Langhorne