

# LifeTogether

THE MAGAZINE OF  
WARTBURG THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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Fall 2024



2024 Impact Report

# LifeTogether

The official magazine of Wartburg Theological Seminary for our alumni and friends. Permission is granted for additional use in congregations. Founded in 1854 and located in Dubuque, Iowa since 1889, Wartburg Theological Seminary is one of seven seminaries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

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## FALL EDITION 2024

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## Mission Statement

Wartburg Theological Seminary serves Christ's church through the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by being a worship-centered community of critical theological reflection where learning leads to mission and mission informs learning.

The community embodies God's mission by stewarding resources for engaging, equipping, and sending collaborative leaders who interpret, proclaim and live the gospel of Jesus Christ for a world created for communion with God and in need of personal and social healing.

# Contents

Fiscal Year 2023–2024  
Impact Report Edition

<b>DISCOVERING THE POWER OF VOICE</b>	<b>4</b>
Dr. Samantha Gilmore’s Journey in Homiletics	
<b>HONORING BEN LARSON: A LEGACY OF FAITH, SERVICE, AND ACCOMPANIMENT</b>	<b>6</b>
Wartburg Dedicates Reception Area in Memory of Ben Larson and the People of Haiti	
<b>A MILESTONE GIFT FOR BARBARA</b>	<b>8</b>
A “Big Idea” Benefits Wartburg Students	
<b>2024–2025 INCOMING STUDENTS</b>	<b>9</b>
Statistics and Information	
<b>REMEMBERING WTS PROFESSOR EMERITUS THE REV. DR. JIM BAILEY</b>	<b>10</b>
A Legacy of Faith, Scholarship, and Pastoral Care	
<b>INTRODUCING THE REV. DR. CLAYTON FAULKNER</b>	<b>12</b>
Dean of the Chapel	
<b>INTRODUCING SARAH MILLMAN</b>	<b>14</b>
Vice President of Finance/Operations & HR	
<b>A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS</b>	<b>15</b>
Annual Impact Report 2024	
<b>A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT</b>	<b>16</b>
Annual Impact Report 2024	
<b>ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT</b>	<b>17</b>
Fiscal Year 2023–2024 by the Numbers	
<b>WARTBURG SEMINARY DONOR SUPPORT</b>	<b>19</b>
Loeche Lifetime Giving Society	
<b>WARTBURG SEMINARY DONOR SUPPORT</b>	<b>22</b>
Individual Donor Support	
<b>WARTBURG SEMINARY ESTATE SUPPORT</b>	<b>34</b>
Help With Your Legacy Planning	
<b>WARTBURG SEMINARY INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT</b>	<b>35</b>
Synods, Congregations, Foundations, and Businesses	
<b>WARTBURG SEMINARY LEGACY SUPPORT</b>	<b>37</b>
Tower Community and Bequests Received	
<b>FACULTY AND STAFF UPDATES</b>	<b>42</b>
Recent Activities of Wartburg Faculty and Staff	

# Discovering the Power of Voice

## DR. SAMANTHA GILMORE'S JOURNEY IN HOMILETICS

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Samantha Gilmore's path to homiletics wasn't a traditional one. Growing up, she didn't attend church. Instead, she spent her youth immersed in community theatre, performing in classics like *Annie*, *The Sound of Music*, *Oliver*, *Oklahoma*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and *Les Misérables*. However, as she transitioned to college, her focus shifted. Majoring in biblical studies, she was baptized and found a newfound passion in learning Greek, which brought the Bible to life for her.

Driven by this excitement, Samantha enrolled at Princeton Theological Seminary as an eager new Christian ready to learn everything. She initially imagined pursuing a Ph.D. in New Testament studies to delve deeper into Greek, but her journey took an unexpected turn. At Princeton, all first-year MDiv students were required to take a yearlong course titled "Introduction to Speech Communication in Ministry," focusing on the faithful public reading of Scripture across its various genres.

This course resonated deeply with Samantha. It transformed the static words of Scripture into dynamic expressions, asking students to "turn the ink of Scripture back into blood," as Charles Bartow, a foundational figure in Princeton's Speech Department, described it. This approach likened Scripture to sheet music, incomplete until prayed through, embodied, and vocalized. Samantha's background in theatre allowed her to connect with this method intuitively, merging her love for Greek with a profound, embodied experience of Scripture.

Her pivotal moment came at the end of her first year when she met with Professor Nancy Lammers Gross. Nervously, Samantha asked about the path to teaching Scripture communication. Gross's enthusiastic response and immediate support marked the beginning of Samantha's vocational journey. She was given a summer reading list, recommended a workshop in New York City, and appointed as Gross's TA for the following year. From that moment, Gross became Samantha's mentor and cheerleader, shaping her path in homiletics.

Samantha's introduction to the Linklater Method came through a workshop recommended by Dr. Gross.

The weekend “Level 1 Freeing the Natural Voice” workshop at The Linklater Center for Voice and Language introduced Samantha to Kristin Linklater’s embodied voicework. By the end of the first day, she realized its immense potential for preachers and knew she had to learn how to teach it.

The Linklater Method is based on the idea that most people are born with a 2- to 4-octave pitch range for speaking and the innate ability to express a full range of emotions with their entire being. However, cultural conditioning and trauma often narrow this expressive range. For preachers, whose role involves conveying profound and emotional messages, rediscovering this range can be transformative. The Linklater work helps individuals reclaim their natural pitch range and expressiveness, essential for conveying the greater-than-everyday significance of biblical texts and the gospel message.

Samantha saw immediate applications for this in preaching. Reading a psalm or proclaiming the good news of Christ requires more than everyday speech patterns. It demands a broader, more dynamic expression. Linklater’s training equips preachers to embody and convey these messages fully, enhancing their capacity to communicate the profound truths of Scripture.

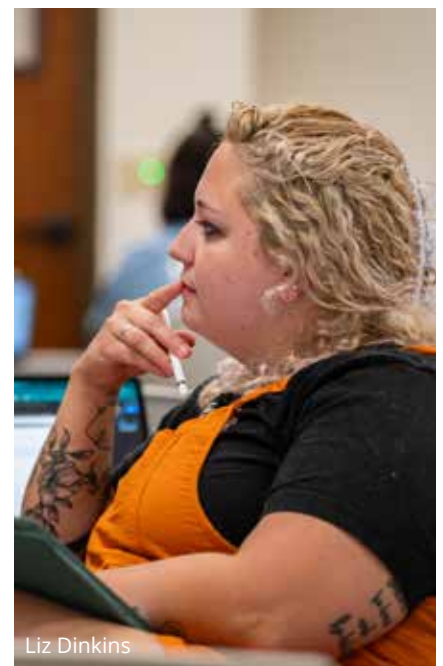
When asked how she saw the role of performance in preaching, Samantha acknowledges that the term “performance” might make some uncomfortable, but she clarifies that it’s not about pretending or being inauthentic. In the context of preaching, performance

is about ensuring that the preacher’s prepared message is effectively communicated to the congregation. It’s about hospitality—making sure people can see, hear, and understand the message.

Performance also involves aligning one’s body and voice with the words. In everyday conversation, this happens naturally, but the vulnerability of the pulpit can lead to nervous tics or a monotonous “preacher’s voice.” This dissonance can undermine the power of the message, making it seem boring or insignificant. Samantha emphasizes the importance of congruence between words, body, and voice, so the message is received as intended.

The field of performance in preaching is evolving, especially with the recent transition of key figures like Charles Bartow, Jana Childers, and Richard Ward. The Performance Studies Workgroup of the Academy of Homiletics recently has been renamed the Performance and Embodiment Workgroup, reflecting a shift toward integrating theory with embodied practice. This change encourages preachers to engage their bodies throughout sermon preparation, making the preaching experience more holistic and authentic.

Samantha’s journey into homiletics and her dedication to embodied voice work highlight the profound connection between body, voice, and Scripture. Her work aims to help preachers communicate the gospel’s dynamic and transformative message with authenticity and full expression.



# Honoring Ben Larson: A Legacy of Faith, Service, and Accompaniment

## WARTBURG DEDICATES RECEPTION AREA IN MEMORY OF BEN LARSON AND THE PEOPLE OF HAITI

Wartburg Theological Seminary recently dedicated the reception area of the Department of Vocation and Formation suite in Fritschel Hall in memory of Ben Larson '10, a beloved alumnus who tragically lost his life during the 2010 Haiti earthquake. This dedication, made possible through the generous giving of his parents, Judd '77 and April Splichal Larson '77, wife Renee Splichal Larson '10, and cousin Jon Splichal Larson '10, and their family, took place prior to the opening worship of Prolog Week on Monday, September 2nd. The Larson family was present for this special occasion.

Ben Larson was in Haiti in January 2010 as part of a January Term study program when a catastrophic earthquake struck the region. He, along with his wife Renee and cousin Jonathan, was staying at St. Joseph's Home for Boys in Port-au-Prince when the building collapsed. Renee and Jonathan survived, but Ben did not.

Reflecting on the significance of the room's dedication, Renee shared, "Wartburg is a place and community that has profoundly shaped and impacted Jon and me (and Ben!). As graduates and now alumni, we are invested in the continuation of the formation of people for ordained leadership in the ELCA. Ben loved Wartburg and loved the church. It feels right and good to have a space that welcomes people, a space where students come for help, to be dedicated in honor of Ben and the Haitian people. One could always find Ben in the places of communal gathering, inviting others in, and engaging them in conversation."

Ben's sense of accompaniment and service extended far beyond his local community. His parents, Judd and April, recall how Ben was deeply influenced by global companions from an early age. He had the privilege of learning from leaders like Bishop Gloria Cortez of Nicaragua and participated in synod visits to places like Ethiopia and Guyana. These experiences profoundly shaped Ben's ministry and his desire to walk alongside those who are often overlooked or marginalized. His trip to Ethiopia, in particular, sparked his passion for global service, eventually leading him to Haiti.

Renee added, "As Ben's family, it is important for us to remember the people of Haiti, and others around the world who suffer because of violence, natural disaster, and food insecurity. An endowed scholarship has been created at Wartburg to aid students who travel to developing countries for their January Term. Ben spent a J-Term in Guyana (with Jon!) and one in Haiti. These experiences of being in relationship with people around the globe shaped his understanding of the global church and his pastoral identity. We hope the same can be true for future Wartburg students."



Ben Larson. Submitted photo.

The outpouring of support from the Wartburg community and beyond has had a profound impact on the Larson family. Judd and April expressed immense gratitude for the way the community wrapped their arms around Renee and Jonathan in the days following the earthquake, providing space and support as they grieved. This sense of hospitality and accompaniment is, as April noted, "in Wartburg's bones."

Renee reflects on this support, saying, "In those dark days following Ben's death, the love and support from the Wartburg community were a lifeline. They held us in our grief, reminding us that we were not alone, even in our deepest pain."



The Larson Family

Ben's memory continues to inspire and touch lives, even 15 years after his death. His parents are frequently approached by people whose lives were impacted by Ben's kindness and generosity, whether through his music, his ministry, or simply by sharing a meal. "He had this ability to make people feel welcomed and loved," April shared. "He would gather friends, break bread, and create a space where everyone felt they belonged."

Renee shares a story that she feels best represents Ben's spirit: "Ben was known for inviting all kinds of people to share a meal while in college. He would take all of his money for the month and go buy steak and wine and liberally invite friends to come and eat and gather. This meant he had no other money for the month, but he exhibited a lavish sense of hospitality, joy in gathering around a meal, and a trust that his needs would be met for the rest of the month."

She continues, "Music permeated Ben's life. It poured out of him and gave a rhythm to his walk. Sometimes we would be in the middle of something and he would suddenly stop and say, 'I have an idea and need to go and write a song!' Right after the Haiti earthquake happened and Ben was buried beneath concrete rubble, I heard him singing about the Lamb of God who bears the sin of all the world away. Liturgy and faith were such a deep part of Ben, that even with his dying breath, he sang the gospel."

For the Larson family, the dedication of the room at Wartburg is more than just a memorial; it is a call to remember and act. "For us to remember Ben is to also to remember the people of Haiti," Renee explained. "Ben died in Haiti, along with hundreds of thousands of Haitian people living in and around Port-au-Prince. We are so honored to have the *Angel of Haiti* painting decorating the Student Services area, further empha-

sizing that we are connected across the globe with our siblings in Christ."

Renee continued: "We hope dedicating the Student Services area in honor of Ben and the people of Haiti keeps this spirit and mission alive ... to know that Christ draws us all into one body, across land and oceans, and even and especially through death. Ben's witness has inspired many to compose music and to love more deeply and broadly, and we pray this continues."

The Larson family has high hopes for the future impact of this space. "Ben had many who came alongside him in his educational journey, as college and graduate work didn't always come easy to him. The wider community, including Student Services, is what helped him to thrive. In this space, we pray students find a listening ear, financial aid, a good book, a spontaneous conversation, and even make a new friend. It is our hope that people encounter Christ through others in this space," Renee said.

She added, "We hope people enter the space and have their eyes attracted to a vibrant painting, and want to know more of the story behind it, and then further wonder: 'Who is Ben Splichal Larson? What is his story and what was he like?' Perhaps it will lead to a student venturing out somewhere new on a J-Term to explore where God is calling them."

Reflecting on Wartburg's efforts to remember and honor Ben, Renee shared, "Ben chose Wartburg Seminary because of the centrality of communal, daily worship, and fellowship. Ben continues to be a part of Wartburg in many ways, but tangibly through his music. While on chapel staff, Ben was asked to write a 'Global Morning Prayer,' which has been sung in the chapel for years. Ben also wrote a liturgy for a class,

*(Continued on page 40)*

# A Milestone Gift for Barbara

## A “BIG IDEA” BENEFITS WARTBURG STUDENTS

BY DAN RANK



When my wife, Barbara Martin Rank, was approaching her 50th birthday, I wanted to give her a gift that truly marked this milestone. I needed a BIG idea. A pricey piece of jewelry seemed too predictable, and no kitchen gadget felt significant enough for such an occasion. A trip could convey that 50 is special, and as a bonus, I'd get to enjoy it too. A well-planned 50th birthday party was another option I considered.

A little background: Barb's dad, the Rev. Dr. Raymond A. Martin, a 1951 Wartburg Theological Seminary graduate, was called by the American Lutheran Church to serve in Madras (now Chennai), India. Along with his wife, Alice, and their children—six-year-old Billy, four-year-old Barbie, and one-year-old Mary—the family sailed to India, where Ray became a professor at Gurukul Lutheran Theological College. They cherished their time in India, loved Gurukul (Ray designed the current chapel), enjoyed curry, and especially adored baby Timmy, born a few years later in Chennai. After 12 years, the family moved to Dubuque when Barb was 16. Ray began teaching Old Testament and Greek at Wartburg Theological Seminary (WTS), and Alice worked in the office. The Evangelical

Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and WTS were central to their lives.

I remembered hearing President Largen speak about people “believing in the mission” of WTS. Ray, Alice, and their children didn't just believe in the mission; they lived it.

Back to my challenge. A trip might be a good idea, but it didn't feel BIG enough. A birthday party wasn't quite Barb's style. I needed something more.

During a visit to Barb's uncle, the Rev. Dr. Edward Paape, a WTS graduate and part-time employee in the Advancement Office, I asked for his advice. Without hesitation, Ed suggested starting an endowed scholarship fund in Ray and Alice's name in honor of Barb's 50th birthday. It was a BIG idea, Ed assured me. After some thought, I realized he was right. This gift would honor Barb's childhood, her family's dedication to the ELCA and WTS, and celebrate helping others.

Although Ray and Alice are no longer with us, the Raymond A. and Alice Martin Endowed Scholarship Fund lives on, supporting WTS students in numerous ways.

The endowed scholarship was such a hit that every year, for our anniversary, Barb's birthday, and Christmas, I contribute to the fund. This tradition simplifies gift-giving and comes with a signed letter from WTS identifying the contribution and the event it recognizes. Our daughters have also contributed to the fund, honoring their mother and grandparents. When Ray passed away, Ed and Irene Paape made a significant contribution. The fund has grown sixfold since it was established 20 years ago and has benefited many students.

The scholarship fund remains one of the biggest and best ideas I've ever had—although I must credit Ed Paape for the inspiration.



# 2024-2025 Incoming Students

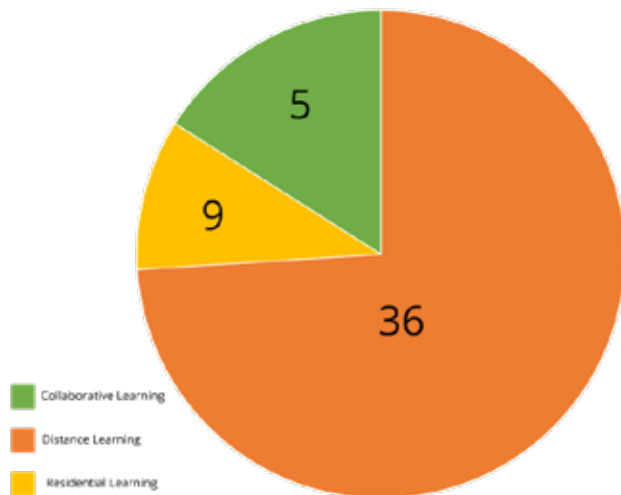
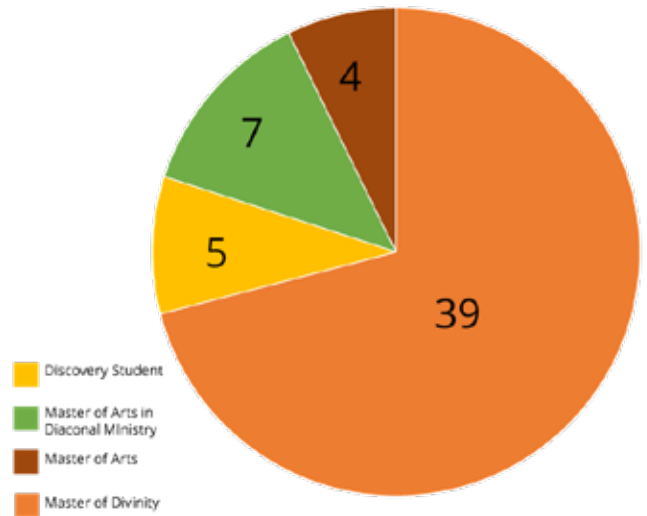
## STATISTICS AND INFORMATION\*

### Degrees and Programs

**This year we welcome 50 master degree seeking students!**

Five 2024 spring semester starts are included in this number.

This fall we will also welcome Discovery students in classes. The majority of these students are fulfilling a requirement from their synod as affiliated students to fulfill their Lutheran requirements or additional classes to support formation.



### Learning Pathways

Our Distance Learning pathway is the most popular pathway chosen, but we still have a strong Residential community on campus. Our Collaborative Learning pathway has a lot of interest, and there are a handful of students hoping to move to Collaborative Learning at a later semester.

### Fast Facts from Admissions

- For the students going through the candidacy process, we have 29 different synods represented in the incoming class.
- We have a great representation of geographic regions, with students coming from 21 different states.
- The youngest student is 21, and the oldest is 78!
- Although we have fewer international students than last year, we have four different countries represented in this class- Palestine, Colombia, Brazil, and USA.
- 14 of our new students are ELCA Fund for Leader full-tuition scholarship recipients, and one is a FFL Federal Chaplain scholarship recipient. We have one TEEM student who received the FFL Mission Developer scholarship.
- Shortest time in the application process (applied to commit): 12 days!
- Longest time in the application process: 3 months!

# Remembering the Rev. Dr. Jim Bailey

## A LEGACY OF FAITH, SCHOLARSHIP, AND PASTORAL CARE



Wartburg Theological Seminary mourns the loss of the Rev. Dr. Jim Bailey, Professor Emeritus of New Testament, who passed away on January 27, 2024. Dr. Bailey's contributions to theological education, his commitment to pastoral care, and his deep faith have left an indelible mark on generations of students, colleagues, and the wider church.

Dr. Bailey's journey of faith and scholarship began early in life. Born and raised in Columbus, Ohio, he developed a passion for the Bible and a calling to ministry that led him to pursue theological education. He attended Ohio State University for one year and graduated from Capital University in 1960. Jim graduated from Evangelical Lutheran Theological Seminary (now Trinity Seminary at Capital University) in 1964, and then completed his Ph.D. in New Testament at St. Mary's College of University of St. Andrews. His academic achievements laid the foundation for a life-long vocation of teaching and ministry.

Dr. Bailey joined the faculty of Wartburg Theological Seminary in 1985, and he served for 18 years as Professor of New Testament. His scholarship was both rigorous and accessible, marked by a deep commitment to helping students engage with the biblical text in ways that were both intellectually challenging and spiritually enriching.

Beyond his academic work, Dr. Bailey was a pastor at heart. His approach to teaching was deeply pastoral, always attentive to the spiritual needs of his students. He was known for his ability to listen, to offer wise counsel, and to accompany students through the challenges of seminary life.

His pastoral care extended beyond the seminary walls. Dr. Bailey was active in his local congregation, where he regularly preached, taught Bible studies, and provided pastoral care. He also served as a mentor to many young pastors, offering guidance and support as they navigated the early years of ministry.

### REFLECTIONS FROM FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES

**The Rev. Dr. Nathan C. P. Frambach**, Professor of Pastoral Care, reflects on his early days at Wartburg: "WTS Professor Emeritus Rev. Dr. Jim Bailey was a beloved colleague, scholar, and teacher with a gentle smile and kind word for everyone he met. Jim and Judy Bailey were so very kind and generous to us and were among the first people to welcome and host Diane and me when we first moved to Dubuque. As a new member of the WTS faculty, Jim was consistently gracious, supportive, and encouraging to me—a gift for which I continue to be grateful."

**The Rev. Dr. Norma Cook Everist**, professor emerita at Wartburg, shared, "James Bailey was a quiet, calm, faithful professor. A generous faculty colleague, he was respected by his students. Although 'quiet,' he was a profound advocate for justice, up until days before his death. I give thanks for Jim."

**The Rev. Dr. Kristin Johnston Largen**, another former student and current WTS president, remembers Jim Bailey's enduring impact: "Jim Bailey was one of my New Testament professors when I was a seminary student at Wartburg. More than anything he taught me in the classroom, I remember—and was influenced by—who he was as a scholar, teacher, and human being. Jim Bailey was one of the kindest, warmest, and gentlest professors I have ever had. He was unfailingly cheerful and so clearly took delight in doing work that he loved, and being part of the Wartburg community, which he loved. And speaking of love, I can't talk about Jim without talking about his beloved spouse Judy. Boy, were they a great team. They had such a loving partnership; when I think about Jim, I always think about them together."

Largen also recalls a cherished memory: "By the time I came back to Wartburg Seminary as president, Jim had retired, and they had moved up to Duluth. We had lost touch, so I had not seen them in decades. When John and I traveled up to Duluth for the Grandma's Half-Marathon, we looked them up, and we had such a wonderful visit. Jim was still active in his congregation, of course, teaching and participating in the education program, and they were enjoying time with their family. The next morning, during the race, there they were, cheering me on with a sign! That little act of thoughtfulness was just like them. It was a privilege to know Jim, and have him as a professor."

**The Rev. Dr. Troy Troftgruben** reflects on Bailey's mentorship: "Jim was very kind to me as I began teaching New Testament at Wartburg. He offered me first pick among the books in his office as he was preparing to move to Duluth. I took a lot of New Testament books. I still encounter Jim's highlighting and margin notes in them today. During my first sabbatical, I interviewed Jim about his years as a New Testament seminary professor, asking him what he was glad he did—and what he wished he would have done differently. He gave me helpful perspective on his legacy as I contemplated my own. Jim invested a lot of energy into teaching. It showed not only in the classroom but also in his writing. His book *Contrast Community*, for example, is highly readable and approachable—in ways that have directly influenced my own approach to writing my first books as a seminary professor. I have always appreciated his work on the Sermon on the Mount. It continues to influence my own teaching on that portion of Scripture."

**The Rev. Dr. Samuel Giere**, Professor of Biblical Interpretation recalls, "From when he was one of my instructors (1993–1997), Jim was both a kind-hearted and rigorous teacher. He modeled faithful service to the gospel, a commitment to the ministry in both congregation and the Churchwide organization, and collegiality with his fellow colleagues. Later as a colleague, he was always supportive and encouraging, willing to lend an ear when needed."



Jim Bailey pictured with Winston Persaud and Sam Giere

**The Rev. Dr. Craig Nesson**, Professor of Contextual Theology and Ethics and the William D. Streng Professor for the Education and Renewal of the Church, shares: "The Rev. Dr. James L. Bailey, Professor of New Testament Emeritus at WTS, was a strong pastoral presence, gifted teacher, and strong advocate for peace with justice for the Palestinian people. Together with Judy, they demonstrated hospitality and love to students and colleagues alike over their many years of service to the seminary community. Dr. Bailey wrote a commentary entitled *Contrast Community: Practicing the Sermon on the Mount*. In it, he writes: 'As church-communities, they were to seek God's way of

mercy and justice as an alternative reality to their own endangered state, an alternative reality expressed in their fellowship of supportive concern and its hopeful view of a future guaranteed by God.' These words call us to faithfulness in our time to the person and way of Jesus Christ. I give thanks for the life, witness, and legacy of my colleague and friend, Jim Bailey."

**The Rev. Dr. David Lull and Karen Lull** remember their deep friendship: "We are grateful to have had both Jim and Judy as friends and cherish memories of their generous hospitality. We miss Jim immensely and we continue to treasure our friendship with Judy. In the course of thirteen wonderful years with Jim and Judy, we learned about their persistent fight for equal rights, for the humanity of everyone, and most especially for the peoples of the Middle East as the Palestinians struggled for a just peace in their ancient homeland. We spent many hours together strategizing on ways to make more people in Dubuque, the churches at large, and the rest of the world more aware of the plight of the Palestinians and of the many people in Palestine and Israel who were trying so hard to make it a safe place for all peoples. One of the highlights of our friendship was a trip together to Turkey to visit many ancient Asia Minor sites important to the writing of the New Testament texts. During that trip, no one enjoyed baklava more than Jim and Karen!"

Finally, **the Rev. Dr. Winston Persaud**, Professor of Systematic Theology, the Kent S. Knutson & UELC Professor in Theology & Mission, and Director of the Center for Global Theologies, shares: "I first met Jim and Judy, and their sons, Jeff and Doug, in early January 1976, at Concordia College, Moorhead, MN, where I (a second-year international MDiv student at Wartburg Theological Seminary) was engaged in a pastoral practicum 'shadowing' the two campus pastors, Carl Lee and Ernie Mancini, in order to learn some of the basics of pastoral ministry on a college campus. Throughout the weeks of my January interim, I had several conversations with Jim, both in their home, as a dinner guest, and on campus. I was struck then, and throughout the years that Jim was a colleague on the faculty at WTS, by Jim's faithfulness in reading and interpreting Scripture (with a focus on the New Testament) so that the Word of God may speak to people in the concrete realities of their lives. Jim enjoyed playing volleyball and table tennis, throwing himself into each game fully as a player. As I write this reflection, his cheekiness is remembered in his smile and laughter at a good joke, both his own and another's."

Dr. Bailey's legacy at Wartburg Theological Seminary is profound. He shaped the lives of countless students who have gone on to serve the wider church.

# Introducing the Rev. Dr. Clayton Faulkner

## DEAN OF THE CHAPEL

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### Will you tell us a little about your journey in ministry and what led you to consider the role of Dean of the Chapel?

I was baptized and confirmed in the United Methodist Church and in high school was drawn to the Baptist church through their music and worship ministry. When I went to college, I started serving in a campus ministry and felt a call from the Spirit to dedicate my life to serving God in ministry. It's been a long, adventure-filled road that has led me here.

I served a variety of churches in worship and music ministry for over 20 years. Along the way I completed master and doctoral degrees in worship. Most recently I served as the Director of Worship, Music, and Technology at Faith Lutheran Church in Bellaire, Texas for 11 years. It was there that I began to discern a call to Word and Sacrament ministry, which led me to Wartburg in 2017. The Collaborative Learning option was very appealing and allowed me to attend seminary, continue serving Faith, and support my family. I completed my MDiv in 2021 and was called to serve New Life Lutheran Church in Pearland, Texas in 2022.

When I saw the Dean of the Chapel position posted online, I felt that inner tug that makes you stop and consider, "Is this something God is calling me to?" I've always felt interested in academics and thought that eventually, one day I may end up serving in higher education in some capacity (there are few that toil away at doctoral work without entertaining this possibility). So, I began a discernment process that lasted several months. It included conversations with my family, spouse, colleagues, and my spiritual director. I opened the door to the possibility, and the Spirit did the rest. Throughout the process of discernment, interviews, and all the logistics that are involved in a major change of life like this, there have been too many coincidental things falling in place near flawlessly for it to be anything other than God's orchestration. There is an alignment to how things have worked out that is hard to explain as anything but



Submitted photo.

the Spirit's work. I am humbled and honored to accept the role of Dean of the Chapel and return home to the castle.

### What excites you most about the opportunity to serve as the Dean of the Chapel at Wartburg?

There is much to be excited about because I believe that Wartburg will be a great place to serve. My time as a student here was crucial to my formation not only as a pastor, but as a baptized child of God. And that is what excites me the most: playing a small role in the formation of future pastors and deacons in Christ's church. I want to help shape the worship life of the ELCA, and the training of our leaders is one of the most important ways to accomplish this.

### What is your vision for the liturgical life of our seminary? How do you balance tradition with innovation in worship?

Wartburg has a long history of being a worship-centered community. Worship is central to the identity of this seminary—it is baked into our DNA. Few theological schools commit themselves to pausing



mid-morning five days a week for word, sacrament, song, and prayer. My vision for the liturgical life of Wartburg is to maintain our well-established centrality of worship. Students, staff, and faculty all show up on common ground in the Loehe Chapel in need of God's grace, Jesus' words, and the Spirit's vitality. There are no grades to be earned in chapel, only the bond of our community grafted into the mystery of the Triune God. Chapel is where we ponder our callings, stand in awe of divine love, and seek reconciliation. Wartburg keeps worship at the center because we want pastors and deacons to keep worship at the center of their own lives as well as the center of the churches they will serve.

**Can you share an example of a worship service or liturgical moment that deeply affected you? What made it meaningful?**

I was part of a team that helped design and plan the last ELCA Worship Jubilee in Atlanta in July 2015. I served as the liaison to the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church for an evening prayer service that was one of the most profound worship experiences for me.

Two primary things made it so profound. One, I have a biracial family and am the father of two black sons. Two, this service was one month after the Charleston church shooting that took place at Mother Emanuel AME.

There were several points throughout the service that were emotionally overwhelming for me. The racial injustices that were bubbling to the surface of our country at that time (and continue to) made for a palpable lament. The choir lifted their voices and hands in praise, singing the songs of freedom that have united generations. The assembly sang with vigor the words, "Rid the earth of torture's terror, you whose hands were nailed to wood." We were led into a time of corporate lament and confession where we mourned Black and Brown men and women who

are killed extrajudicially every 28 hours, followed by a commemoration honoring the Charleston Nine in which we spoke aloud their names. The assembly sang with sorrow the hymn, "They Met to Read the Bible" : "We grieve a wounded culture where fear and terror thrive, where some hate others for their race and guns are glorified." One of the most moving offerings of that worship was the solo sang by Mary Harris Gurley, who was a contemporary of the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr and sang a hymn at his funeral. She sang, "If I Can Help Somebody," her elderly voice testifying to the truth found in her life. I was moved and healed by the presence of God.

Near the end of the service, we sang The Lord's Prayer, the same version of the song played by Alberta Williams King on June 30, 1974, right before she was gunned down in worship, while sitting on the organ bench. It was a remarkable service, mixed with pain, lament, bittersweet joy, and hope in the resurrection. This worship experience has continually inspired my anti-racism efforts and has left a mark on my soul.

**What role do you believe the Dean of the Chapel should play in the spiritual formation of students?**

The Dean of the Chapel should assist in the formation of students by helping them discover the depth and breadth of Lutheran worship. There is not a single, definitive style of Lutheran worship. It is as diverse as the contexts in which it occurs. It draws on the whole of Christian tradition and the best of the hymnody and liturgy it has produced. Our denomination has also produced excellent guidepost resources and materials to carve our path in worship. And that path is friendly(!), offering meandering options that help to set the table but don't force-feed us. They invite us into a tradition of worship that is theologically rich, ethically bound to neighbor, and open-handed. My role in forming students is to shape their imagination for all that Lutheran worship is and can be.

# Introducing Sarah Millman

**VICE PRESIDENT OF FINANCE/OPERATIONS AND HR**

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## Will you tell us a little about yourself and your professional background?

My husband and I are both native to the Dubuque area and have been married since 2014. Together we have two children, MacKenzie and Waylon. I attended the University of Dubuque where I received a Bachelor of Arts degree in accounting and human resources, as well as a Master of Business Administration. I have more than ten years of experience in both private and public accounting and a passion for helping businesses succeed.

## What inspired you to pursue a career in accounting, and how did your journey lead you to Wartburg Theological Seminary?

It's intriguing to work in a profession that analyzes financial historical data, market trends, and various other metrics to enable better business decision-making. Wartburg Theological Seminary provides an opportunity to contribute to a forward-thinking organization, while driving financial strategy that aligns with long-term goals.

## What attracted you to Wartburg Theological Seminary, and what excites you most about joining the team here?

Wartburg Theological Seminary is a staple in the Dubuque community. It's an exciting opportunity to work with a team of successful and passionate individuals who are all working together for the greater good of the organization.



Submitted photo.

## Outside of work, what are some of your hobbies or interests?

Outside of work, you'll find me spending time with family. I take great pride in coaching my children's elementary school basketball teams.

## Do you have any message you'd like to share with the Wartburg community as you settle into your new role?

It is a great honor to be an appointed member of the President's Administrative Cabinet. I'm grateful for the opportunity to lead the finance and operations activities in support of the Seminary's mission. It has been a wonderful transition and a pleasure meeting so many members of the Wartburg community.

# 2024 Impact Report

## A Letter from the Chair, Board of Directors



As Chair of the Wartburg Theological Seminary Board of Directors, it is my great privilege to reflect on the past year at Wartburg, and to share our ongoing commitment to our mission and values. Wartburg has long been a leader in theological education and formation, and we continue to live out our mission with a deep commitment to diversity, care, and communication. Our guiding principles of listening, wondering, and leading remain at the heart of all we do, shaping our community and our work.

At Wartburg, we believe that true leadership begins with listening. We listen first and foremost to the Wisdom of God, as well as to the voices of our students, faculty, staff, and community. We recognize that each perspective enriches our understanding and strengthens our mission. We seek to foster a culture of open communication, to ensure that every member of our seminary feels heard, valued, and respected.

Wondering is another vital component of our community life at Wartburg. We approach our work with a spirit of curiosity and openness, always seeking to learn and grow as we respond to the movement and call of the Holy Spirit. This year, we have explored new ways of engaging with the world around us, asking important questions about how we can better serve God's people in an ever-changing world. By embracing wonder, we are able to innovate and adapt, while still remaining grounded in our historic values and commitments.

As we engage in our mission of forming leaders for the church, we strive to lead by example, in a spirit of holy curiosity, creativity and joy. Grounded in our shared identity as disciples of Jesus Christ, we celebrate the richness that diversity brings to our seminary, and are steadfast in our commitment to creating an environment where everyone can thrive.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude for the members who have served on the Board and are departing this year. We thank Andy Willenborg, Treasurer; Rev. Michael Carlson '04; and Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson for their dedicated service and contributions to Wartburg's mission. Their wisdom, guidance, and commitment have been invaluable, and they will be greatly missed.

At the same time, we eagerly anticipate welcoming our new Board members at our October meeting: Sarah Millman, Treasurer; Rev. Rudy Flores '21; Rev. Gerald Mansholt; Bishop Joy Mortensen-Wiebe; and Deacon Ross Murray.

As we look ahead, we are filled with hope and excitement for the future of Wartburg Theological Seminary. Thank you for being a part of our community and for your continued support of Wartburg Theological Seminary. Together, we are making a difference in the world, one leader at a time.

In gratitude and hope,

Kathy Patrick  
Chair, Board of Directors  
Wartburg Theological Seminary

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## A Note from the President

***“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”***

***– Matthew 28:19***



The call to “disciplize,” as one of my former colleagues used to say, is universal. This call is given to all Christians in our baptism. In other words, “making disciples” is not something that only the pastor or deacon does, but something we all do. We witness to the faith that is in us as we embody Christ’s love and mercy with our co-workers, as we manifest Christ’s grace in our families, and as we reflect our Christian identity in how we give our money, our time, and our attention.

Thanks to your support, here at Wartburg Theological Seminary, we are forming leaders who are prepared to guide congregations and other Christian communities into an active embodiment of their faith. Because our students have been formed by intentional Christian community here, they know better how to foster intentional Christian community there. Because our students have wrestled with difficult conversations here, they know better how to facilitate difficult conversations there. And, most importantly, because our students are deeply grounded in a worship-centered life together here, they know the importance of centering one’s life in the worship of Jesus Christ there.

This Wartburg Seminary community could not exist without your partnership in our mission. We are deeply grateful for your prayers, for your encouragement, and for your financial generosity, reflected in the pages of this Impact Report.

We give thanks to God for your loyalty to Wartburg Theological Seminary. God has blessed us through you, enabling us to form the next generation of leaders for the sake of the gospel in the world.

May we all respond to the movement of the Holy Spirit, swirling in our midst, and say “yes” to Christ’s call to make disciples, joyfully inviting others into the life-giving relationship with God that makes all things new.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristin Johnston Largen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

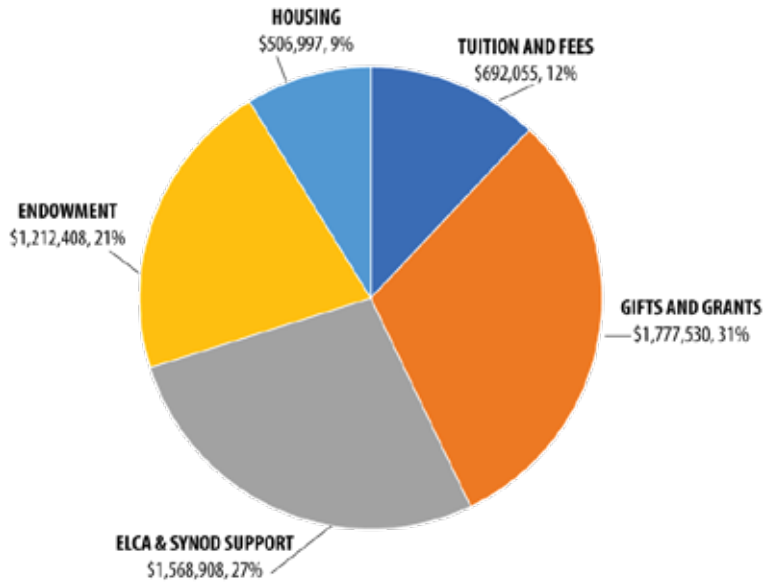
The Rev. Dr. Kristin Johnston Largen  
President, Wartburg Theological Seminary



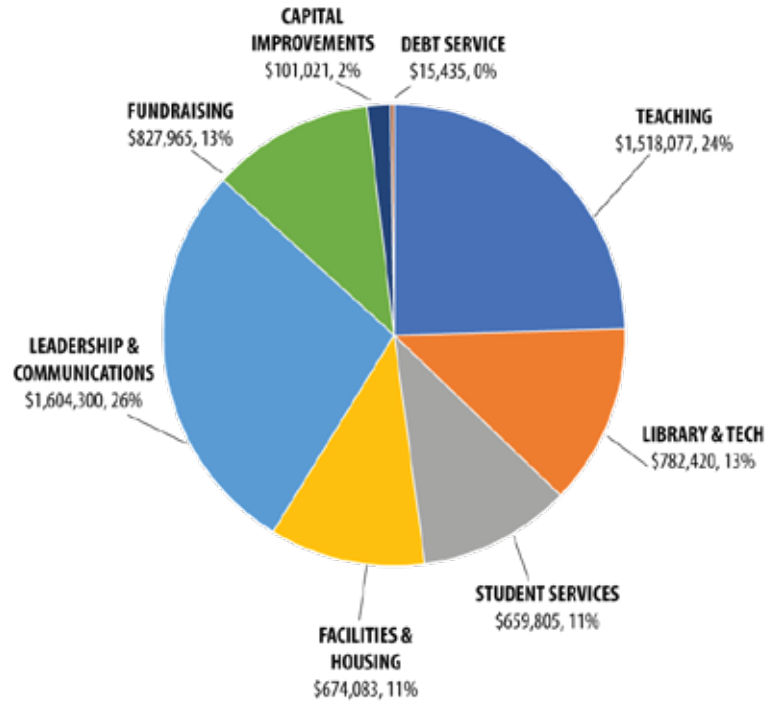
# Impact Report

## Fiscal Year 2023-24 By the Numbers

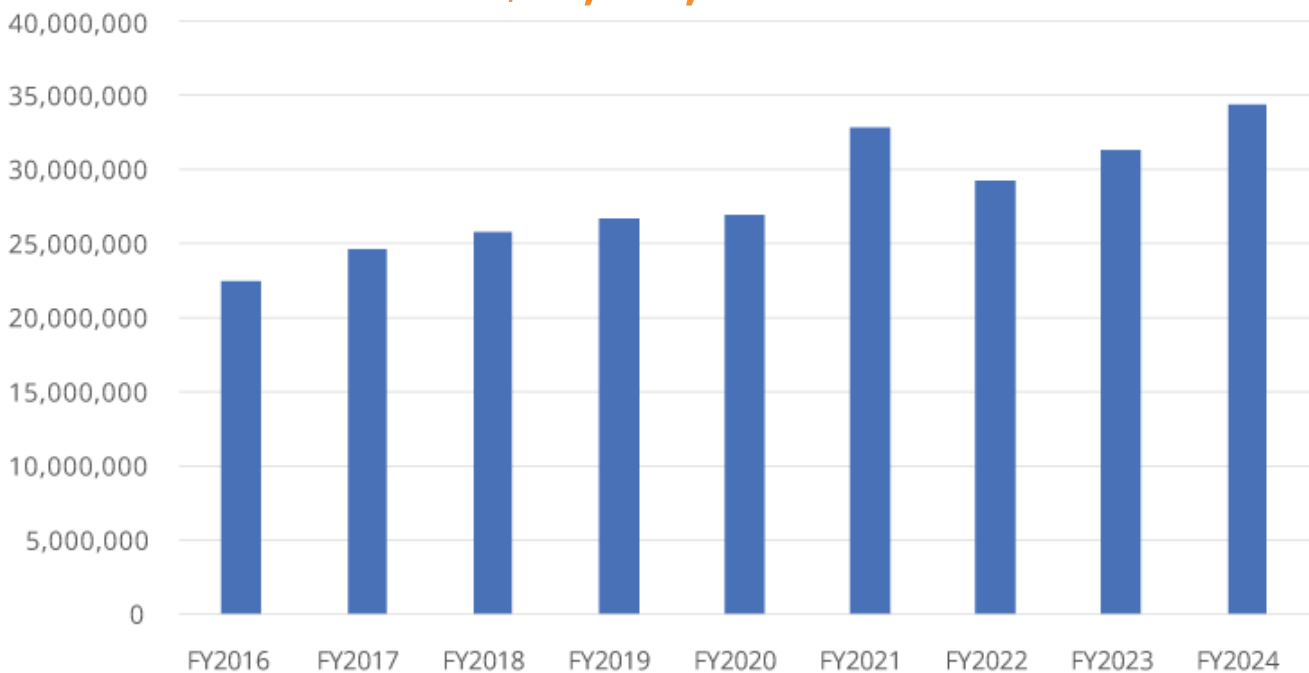
### INCOME \$5,757,898



### EXPENSES \$6,183,106



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Sam Trottier



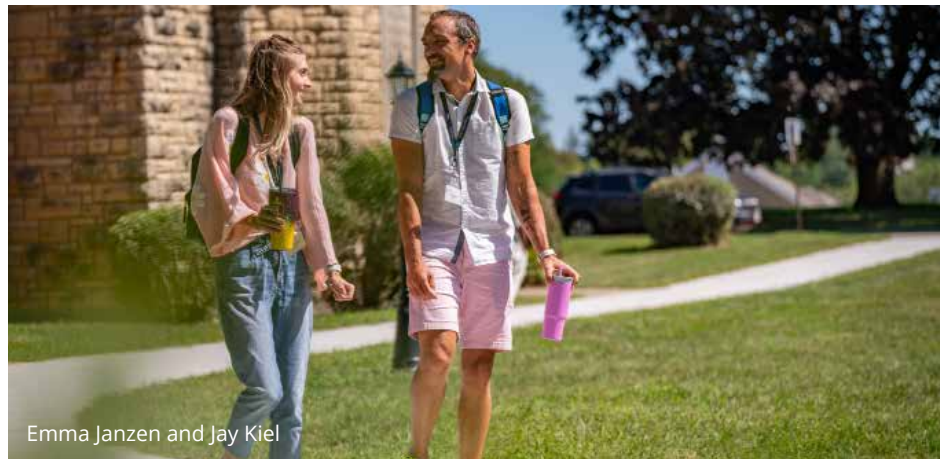
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**“ JOHN VICKERY, CONTINUING YEAR STUDENT**

My time at WTS has given me a place to learn and grow in my faith and a sense of call — and I have found a tight-knit community of peers to walk alongside with on this journey of formation, and beyond.”

# INDIVIDUAL DONOR SUPPORT

The generous people listed here have given or directed gifts to support the mission of Wartburg Seminary during the 2023–2024 fiscal year. These gifts include support for the Annual Fund, which is critical to our continued financial strength, flexibility, and sustainability, as well as support to the endowment or special projects. A cross (†) is used to indicate the person has died within the year.

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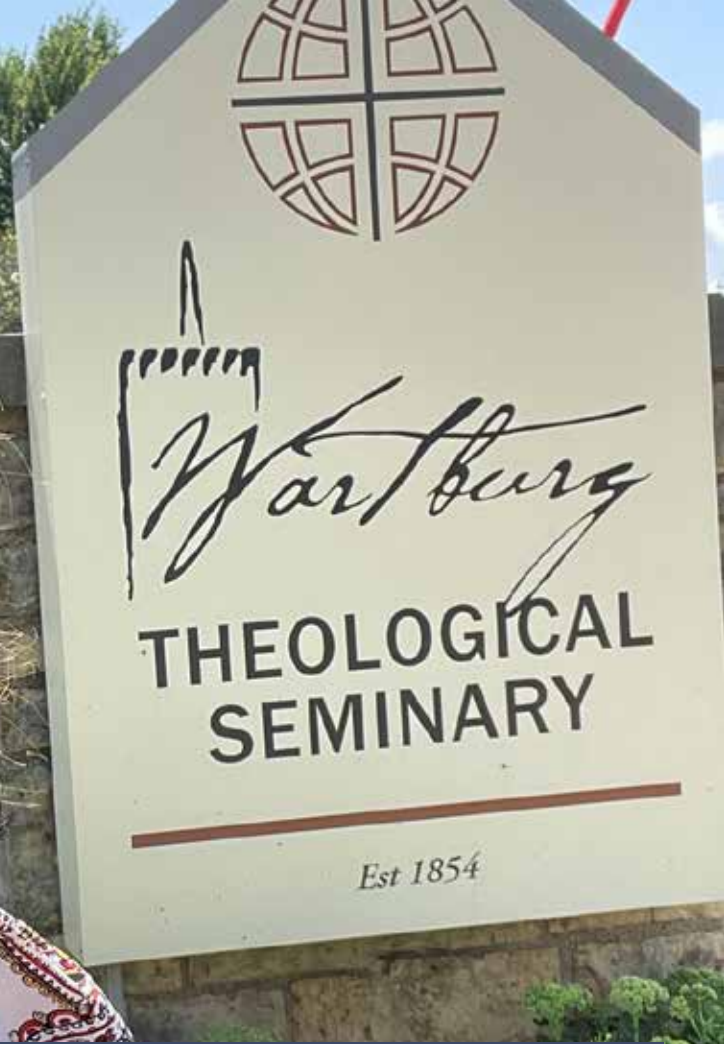
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“

**SHEENA FOSTER, FIRST YEAR STUDENT**

When I arrived on Wartburg’s campus, I found myself in a liminal space. Prolog Week not only fostered a strong sense of community but also became a transformative experience that deepened my calling and purpose as a lay leader, inspiring me to serve with radical love, compassion, and justice, all deeply grounded in the gospel.”

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I am, because you are. I am who I am today, because of who and what the Wartburg Seminary community is. There are not enough words to express the joy and gratitude I have for my time spent, and my time yet to come at WTS. I am who I am today, because of you."



# Wartburg Seminary Estate Support

Estate of Ms. Winifred Allen  
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Wartburg Seminary has joined forces with the ELCA Foundation, Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest, and Lutheran Planned Giving Services of Nebraska to offer professional estate planning guidance and resources. The individuals listed below, together with the WTS Development Staff, stand ready to help you with your planned giving questions or dreams.

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## *The Life of an International Student*

*An interview with Jamil and Claudine Zoughbi*

Monday, October 14, 2024 | 7:00 PM | ZOOM

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 Rev. Casey & Rev. Lucinda Zesch  
 Mrs. Arleen Ziemer  
 Ms. Geraldine A Zimmerman

## WARTBURG DEDICATES RECEPTION AREA IN MEMORY OF BEN LARSON AND THE PEOPLE OF HAITI (CONT.)

focusing primarily on the age of people missing from communal worship, 18- to 35-year-olds. He eventually called the liturgy: 'Behold, I Make All Things New,' which has been sung at Wartburg. The dedication of the Students Services space is another mutual gift that we hope blesses Wartburg as much as it blesses our family."

Renee also highlighted the importance of Wartburg's global perspective: "Wartburg has a rich history of being mindful of the global church. Because of Wartburg's decision to include the *Angel of Haiti* painting in the Student Services space, people cannot help but be reminded of other cultures, as well as the world. We are a global community and we are thankful Wartburg continues to lift this up."

Learn more at <https://www.benstillsings.com>.







## “ BRECK COGSWELL, FINAL YEAR M.DIV. RL

Prolog Week occupies a very special place in my heart. Each time we gather in this way, we come together to discern and decide who we are called to be as the (ever-changing) Wartburg community of THIS academic semester, THIS particular moment in time. As a residential learner who just moved back to campus after a year of internship, this Prolog Week more than any other has been an experience of the fullness of that re-gathering, and what a gift to return to a place that leans into groundedness just as it leans into transformation, that values grieving together as well as celebrating joy together, and that both affirms and challenges each of us with care as we gain a deeper understanding of what God might be up to in our lives, in our learning, and in every stage of living out our vocations. What a special, Spirit-filled week it has been!”

# Faculty & Staff Updates



**Jennifer Agee**, Graduate Writing Instructor, presented her paper “Piranesi and Neptune: How Susanna Clarke’s Spellbinding Story Orbits Planet Narnia” at the Inkling Folk Fellowship on August 16.



**Astine Bose** joined the Development Team in September as the Director for Development Services. Astine’s husband, Ryan, is a first year MDiv student at Wartburg Seminary. Previously they worked together in Iringa Tanzania as the Program Coordinators for Bega Kwa Bega, a partnership with the Iringa Diocese and the St. Paul Area Synod. Astine and Ryan both grew up in Cedar, Kansas where they still have family today.



**Rev. Dr. Helen Chukka**, Assistant Professor of Hebrew Bible, is working on an article on ‘Mixed Marriages in the Old Testament’ for Oxford Bibliographies in addition to four commentaries on RCL texts for *Working Preacher*. She will also be one of the workshop leaders for the preaching workshop in Dubuque this October. Additionally, she is teaching an advanced-level course ‘Women in the Hebrew Bible: Intersectional Perspectives’ this semester.



**Rev. Dr. Norma Cook Everist**, Distinguished Professor of Church and Ministry, Emerita, wrote a chapter, “A Theology of Diakonia at the Margins” for the forthcoming Regnum Press book *Diaconal Studies: Lived Theology for the Church in North America*. She taught two classes at North Iowa Area Community College, one on Constitution Day, September 17, “The First Amendment: Freedom of Religion, Speech, and the Press.” She presented “Relationships and Hospitality” for the Nebraska Synod Fall Candidacy Retreat. She continues to mentor by Zoom a growing number of people across the country and around the world.



This September, **Rev. Dr. Samuel Giere**, Professor of Biblical Interpretation, had the pleasure of presenting and leading conversation on the intersection of faith and imagination in the midst of the current deep political divide and against the backdrop of Christian Nationalism and other distortions of the gospel with the Cedar River Forum at St Andrew Lutheran in Cedar Falls, Iowa, and the Fall Theological Conference of the Northwest Minnesota Synod of the

ELCA in Warroad, Minnesota. Even cooler, in early August he attended as a student a weeklong bagpiping academy at Fettes College in Edinburgh, Scotland.



Over the summer, **Dr. Samantha Gilmore**, Assistant Professor of Homiletics, wrote four essays for an upcoming Sundays and Seasons: Preaching Resource and participated in an Embodiment Essentials workshop for educators. This fall, Samantha is co-organizing and will lead a workshop for Nourishing the Preaching Life: A Fellowship of Preachers, a one-day preaching conference for local clergy happening in Dubuque on October 19. As the Performance and Embodiment Workgroup convener for the Academy of Homiletics, she is organizing and will moderate a panel on “Teaching Embodied and Performative Aspects of Preaching in Online Spaces” at the annual meeting in December.



**Miranda Hoey**, Alumni Development Officer, moved from Tripoli, IA to Garnavillo, IA this summer with her husband, Tyler Hoey '21 and one-year-old Cal, to follow Tyler in his new call, which began in August. Miranda continues to work with alums, foundation and institutional donors, as well as donors in Northeast Iowa.



**Michael Johnson**, Vice President of Development, is traveling to Tanzania in October and November with a group of 14 from his congregation, Trinity Lutheran Church in Stillwater, Minnesota. Trinity has had a relationship with a rural Iringa Diocese church, Mwatasi Lutheran, for more than 20 years. The tour will spend a week in Iringa, then travel to Arusha for a week. As the group heads home, Mike will travel to Rwanda for a few days to visit with the leaders of the Lutheran Church in Rwanda.



**Rev. Dr. Martin J. Lohrmann**, Associate Professor of Lutheran Confessions and Heritage, published an article on 1-2 Samuel entitled “It Starts with Hannah” for the Enter the Bible web resource: <https://enterthebible.org/it-starts-with-hannah>. Also, he and Deacon Kellie Lisi recently submitted the manuscript of their book *Food Theology: Real-life Resources for Nourishing Faith*, which has a planned publication date of autumn 2025 with Fortress Press.



**Rev. Dr. Craig Nesson**, Professor of Contextual Theology and Ethics, and the William D. Streng Professor for the Education and Renewal of the Church, is author of the article in *Living Lutheran* titled: "Perspective: A paradigm for the future church. Life of Faith Initiative provides an alternative."



**Rev. Blake Ohren-Shipman '22**, Development Officer, married final year student, Katie Ohren in a wedding near Katie's family in Moorhead, MN. Blake and Katie are living on campus this year and plan to follow God's call for Katie's first placement after graduation. Blake

continues to work with our donors in Central and Western states.



**Rev. Winston D. Persaud, PhD**, Prof. of Systematic Theology, Holder of the Kent S. Knutson and UELC Chair in Theology and Mission, and Director of the Center for Global Theologies, received The Robert A. Pinkerton Humanitarian Service Award on July

27, 2024 in Queens, NY, from Cambridge Academy Alumni Association International, given in recognition of his "Outstanding Contribution in the fields of Education and Theological Leadership." Winston was the history teacher at the Cambridge Academy (a high school in Guyana), from 1969-1974. At the Lutheran Center, Chicago, he gave a theological presentation at the ELCA Missionary Orientation gathering, on July 25, 2024, and was the theological presenter at the all-day staff retreat of ELCA Global Mission, on August 5, 2024. He attended the CSS Candidacy Committee retreat and meeting, August 2-3, 2024, in Kansas City, KS. He attended the all-day Northeastern Iowa Synod "Global Church Together Festival," at Trinity Lutheran Church, in Mason City, IA, and preached at the closing worship service, July 24, 2024.



**Rev. Dr. Cheryl M. Peterson**, Academic Dean and Professor of Ecumenical Theology, will serve as faculty for the Lutheran World Federation's Retreat for Newly Elected Leaders (Bishops and Presidents) in Wittenberg, Germany, this October. She

was invited by Trinity Lutheran Seminary (Columbus, Ohio) to give a presentation on her newly published book during "Trinity Days," also in October. This summer, she preached and presided at St. John's Lutheran and Episcopal Churches in Dubuque. She

also completed and passed a USA Weightlifting Level 1 Coaching course and is now a certified (Olympic) weightlifting coach.



**Rev. Violeta Sigenza**, Director, Centro Teológico Luterano Multicultural, Development Officer, and Coordinator for Learning for Life, is working from Dallas, TX. Violeta continues to lead our multicultural program, Centro Teológico Luterano Multicultural (CTLM) as well as working with our donors in Texas. She has taken on the role of Coordinator for Learning for Life, which helps with continuing education and lay leadership training.



**Kirby Snitker** started with Wartburg Seminary July 1 as a Development Officer. He has hit the ground running, working with our donors in Central and Eastern States. Kirby and his wife, Linda have lived in Dubuque for 30+ years, and have two young adult children in New York and Michigan. Formerly, Kirby worked with DuTrac Community Credit Union since 1998.



**Rev. Dr. Troy Troftgruben** wrote articles for *Living Lutheran* ("Scripture Study, Lutheran Style") and *Currents in Theology and Mission* ("Open-ended Stories in Luke's Travel Narrative") for a Fall issue he oversaw as guest editor. He is teaching this Fall on Luke's

Gospel and Year C at synodical leaders' gatherings in the La Crosse, Northeastern Iowa, and Western North Dakota ELCA synods. Troy has been invited to write a commentary on Luke's Gospel for the New International Commentary on the New Testament series (Eerdmans), which will take many years. This Fall he is assisting Dr Kris Stache with co-convening a first call cohort program with new Wartburg grads.



**Dr. Man-Hei Yip**, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, joined a group of ELCA seminary faculty from Luther Seminary and Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in June on a theological education immersion study trip to Indonesia, organized by

ELCA Global Mission. The primary objectives of the trip were to learn about the history of the churches in Indonesia, their engagement in mission and theological education, and about the ELCA's accompaniment with churches in the region, and explore ways to strengthen the partnership with them.



## Upcoming Events

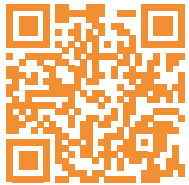
**October 14, 2024**  
This Is Wartburg: Live!

**November 2, 2024**  
Considering Your Call Saturday

**December 3, 2024**  
Giving Tuesday

**March 28-30, 2025**  
Considering Your Call Weekend

**April 22-24, 2025**  
ReFormation and Reunion



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