FALL 2024

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY SPOTLIGHT

ENROLLMENT

The school year began with the highest enrollment in fifteen years at the seminary: 153. A large first-year class of 49 students replaced the 27 men in last year's senior class, 26 of whom were assigned to their first fields of service in May. With 36 men in the middler class and 26 seniors, the on-campus enrollment is 111. In addition, a student from the ELFK, our sister church in Germany, is spending the year on campus. Forty men are serving as vicars, primarily in congregations and missions across the United States, with one serving in Canada, and another in Colombia.

WLS GRANTED ACCREDITATION WITH THE ASSOCIATION OF THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS

The seminary decided to pursue accreditation, in part, to have outside eyes look at its overall program. The governing board and the faculty, desiring to improve in their synod-assigned work of preparing men for service as pastors in WELS, sought out an accrediting agency to provide an objective assessment of the seminary's work.

The seminary applied for, and was granted, associate membership in the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in 2018. Three years later, the seminary submitted a readiness report, the first step in the process for a school seeking initial accreditation. ATS approved the report and granted the seminary permission to move forward with the next step in the accreditation process: a self-study.

A steering committee, chaired by Dr. Kenneth Cherney, Jr., appointed faculty members to serve on one of three self-study committees. Each committee assessed the seminary's work in light of the standards of ATS's Commission on Accrediting. They prepared written reports explaining how the seminary meets the standards, while also identifying potential areas for improvement. Professor Cherney served as the final editor of the self-study report, compiling the material provided by the three faculty committees and tying the document together.

The self-study report was submitted to ATS in December 2023, in preparation for an April 2024 site visitation. A visitation team appointed by ATS arrived on campus on April 16 for two full days of meetings and conversations with administrators, governing board members, professors, students, and members of the staff. Their goal was to evaluate what had been written in the self-study report, to see if reality matched what they had read.

The visitation team spoke very positively about what they observed in print and in person. They noted as a strength to be maintained the seminary's deep commitment to the model of pastors forming pastors, with experienced pastors being called to the seminary to train future pastors. Based on their visit, the team recommended that the ATS Board of Commissioners grant an initial accreditation of seven years, the maximum number of years that can be granted for an initial accreditation. Members of the visitation team explained that their recommendation should be viewed as strong approval of the program. The ATS Board of Commissioners met in early June to consider the visitation team's report. They concurred with the recommendation and granted an initial accreditation for a period of seven years, with the next comprehensive evaluation visit in spring 2031.

GROW IN GRACE
PARTNERING WITH PASTORS

SUMMER QUARTER RECAP

Summer Quarter has been a long-standing continuing education program run by the seminary. In recent years, this on-campus program moved to an every-other-year pattern (on campus in even years). The seminary has been able to serve pastors from all ages and ministry experiences through this program. True to this tradition, from June 17 to 28, 2024, the seminary welcomed 55 pastors, including eleven pastors from overseas, to on-campus Summer Quarter.

The instructors and students were blessed as they studied in class, worshiped at daily chapel, and enjoyed fellowship time outside of class. In an effort to create a more event-type feel to Summer Quarter, new elements were added. This year's Summer Quarter had planned fellowship activities, including two dessert socials with the seminary faculty, two nights with live music, two mission presentations, and locally roasted coffee on Fridays.

With most of these additions resulting in a positive response, you may see some repeated at the next on-campus Summer Quarter in 2026 (June 15–19 and June 22–26).

"A single best part is hard to nail down. I learned so much, enhanced my familiarity with the Word, received the means of grace, got to know brothers in the ministry, and was refreshed spiritually. How can I possibly say what was best?"
–Feedback from Summer Quarter 2024

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 12	Friends of the Seminary Day
December 8	Christmas Concerts
January 6-17	Winterim
February 4-6	Mission and Ministry
May 22	Call Day and Graduation Concert
May 23	Graduation

PASTORAL STUDIES INSTITUTE

a partnership of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and WELS Joint Missions

The Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) has three primary areas of responsibility: 1) providing theological training for non-Anglo seminary students in North America, 37 at present, to prepare them for ministry in their context; 2) supporting world mission One Teams worldwide, at their request, by reviewing curriculum, lending teaching assistance to supplement on-site missionaries, assisting with course development, and overseeing training programs; and 3) helping world mission One Teams with new opportunities that present themselves.

Recently, Professor Skip Goetzinger, the director of PSI, returned from a two-week teaching trip to Maor Theological Seminary in Bishoftu, Ethiopia. Maor is a part of WELS' sister church, the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia, with Rev. Dr. Kebede serving as the president of both the church body and the seminary. Four of the Maor students were involved in a six-week intensive training program that was a year in the planning. From 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., six days a week, these students dedicated themselves to study. During the first three weeks they took courses taught by three of the Africa One Team (AOT) missionaries. Professor Goetzinger taught systematic theology and the book of Romans during weeks four and five. This is just one of the ways the PSI Team serves the theological education needs of our world mission One Teams and national church bodies in our CELC fellowship.

Please pray for the work being done to train pastors in North America and to support theological education in places around the world. Pray also for the men who are studying, that they may approach their study of God's Word with great zeal and may be well prepared to proclaim to others the saving message of Jesus' gospel.