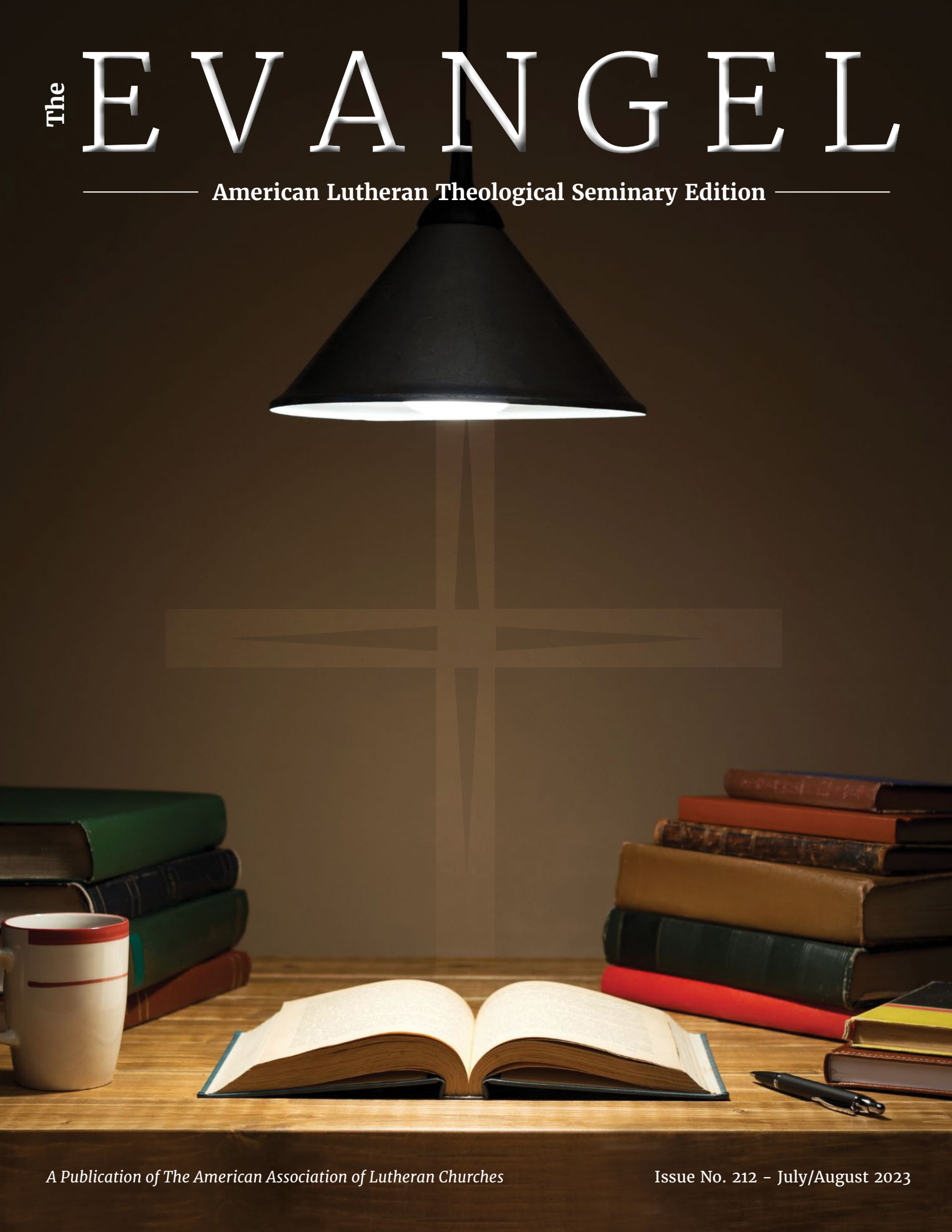


# The EVANGEL

American Lutheran Theological Seminary Edition





# From the Editor

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Welcome to this month's edition, which provides an update on the seminary. How refreshing to be reminded of what God is doing: being faithful to His Church and calling men into the ministry of shepherding.

As I read the articles submitted for this issue, several groups of people came to mind:

**Leadership:** Those making decisions and leading the seminary have a lot going on: day to day operations, communication, finances, applications, current students, faculty, and much more.

Besides these tasks comes the ultimate concern: are we staying true to Scripture? Are we providing theologically sound teaching, so the students are well-trained?

This is quite a to-do list.

**Students:** The calling of a pastor is different from other vocations. Men are preparing to take on the burden of caring for souls. There is little glory in it, but a desire to assure people of the forgiveness of sins and God's care in difficult times.

And the men and women who take classes to better serve their church, communities, and families in unique ways.

**Pastors:** What a church may not see are the many hours its pastor spends caring for the flock in a variety of ways. He labors over the Scriptures to ensure he preaches and teaches well. Your pastor, like those in emergency professions, has his phone nearby for the calls that may come day or night.

For those parishioners who do notice and take a moment to share a kind word or fill a need without being asked, you are truly a gift to your pastor. As a pastor's wife, I am regularly amazed at how God gives unexpected gifts through the precious people in the Church.

In closing, may I make a suggestion: make this the issue where you take the 60 seconds to cut out the prayer bookmark on pages 17-18 (or click print, if you are reading online). Hang the bookmark on your bathroom mirror or over your kitchen sink, or use it as a bookmark in your Bible, someplace where you'll see it regularly and remember to pray for the seminary leadership, students, and for your own pastor.

Praying with you,

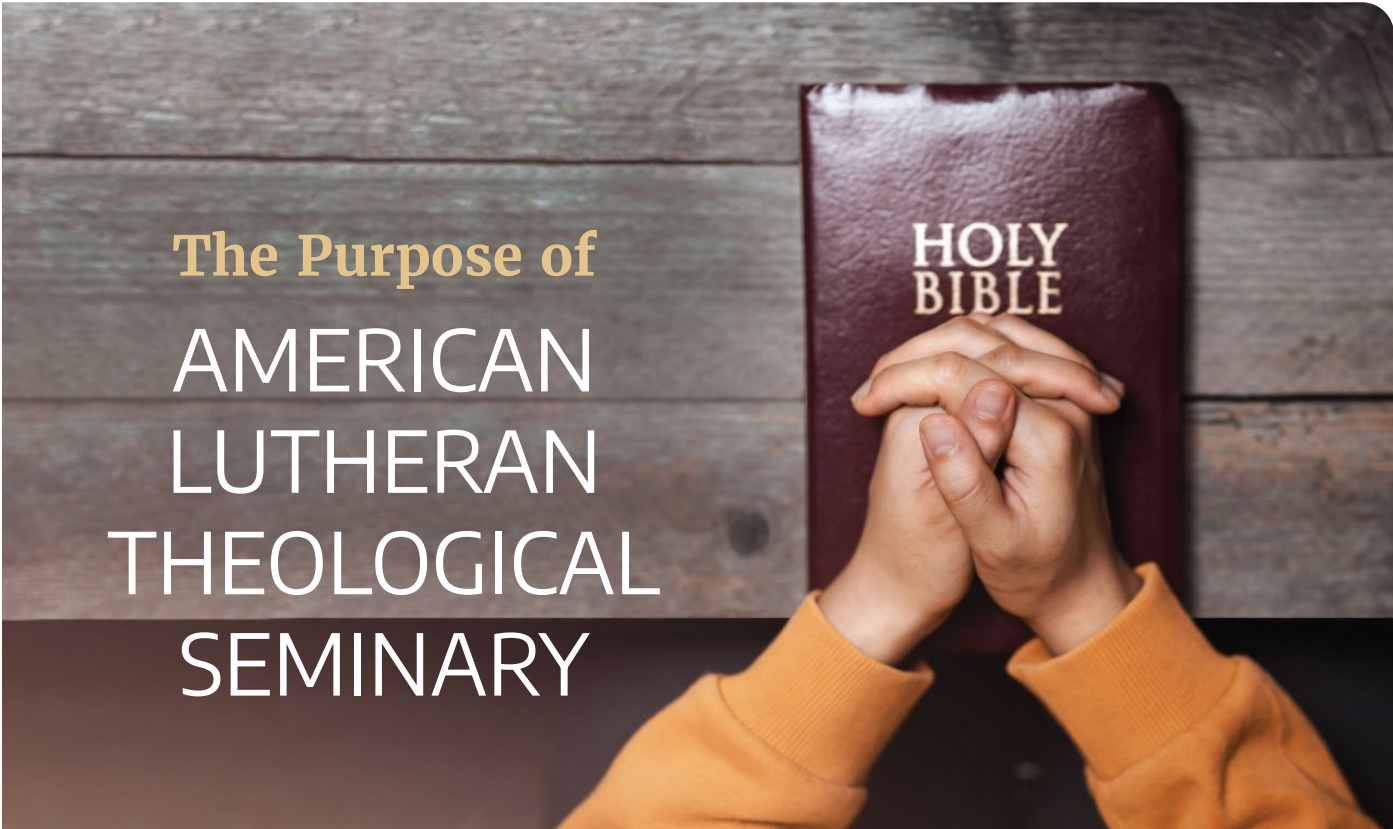
*Gretchen Baker*

Gretchen Baker  
The Editor

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Editor: Gretchen Baker  
Layout & Design: Karen Young



# The Purpose of AMERICAN LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

By Rev. Dr. Cary Larson

*“The purpose of American Lutheran Theological Seminary (ALTS) shall be to train men for the Office of the Holy Ministry of Word and Sacrament for The American Association of Lutheran Churches (The AALC) and for the Body of Christ to include the following functions: preacher-teacher-evangelists; prayer and worship leaders; public apologists; pastoral caregivers (seelsorger) and counselors;[and] practical equippers of the saints.” American Lutheran Theological Seminary Bylaws (2005).*

The confessional Lutheran Church has a rich history and tradition that has impacted the world since the Reformation. One of the critical components of this tradition is the training of pastors through Lutheran seminaries. These institutions have played a crucial role in preserving and advancing the teachings of the confessional Lutheran faith, equipping pastors to serve congregations, and preparing church leaders for service in the Church and society.

In The AALC, we are delighted with the significant increase in seminarians pursuing a Master of Divinity degree or other theological degrees. With that being said, we, as a Lutheran body, must continue to invest in the development of a thriving confessional Lutheran seminary to ensure the continued strength and vitality of the Association. Here are some reasons why:

## 1. Preserving Lutheran theology, doctrine, and practice.

Our ALTS plays a crucial role in preserving the theology, doctrine, and practice of the evangelical Lutheran Church. This institution of The AALC is responsible for teaching the doctrine and practices of the Lutheran Confessions, as well as the history and

heritage of the Church. Through rigorous theological training, students learn to apply the confessional Lutheran worldview to contemporary issues and challenges. A thriving seminary ensures that this training is of the highest quality and prepares future pastors and church workers to serve their congregations with excellence, a primary objective of ALTS when it was formed and continues to this day.

## 2. Equipping pastors to serve their congregations.

The called pastors of The AALC are responsible for providing spiritual leadership and guidance to their congregations. A thriving seminary ensures pastors have the knowledge and skills to fulfill this role effectively. Through rigorous academic training, practical experience, and mentoring relationships, ALTS provides pastors with the tools to lead their congregations in worship, pastoral care, evangelism, and discipleship. All TAALC pastors in the field are encouraged to audit any available ALTS classes at a very modest fee for continuing education and professional development.

I invite the lay leaders of our congregations to encourage their pastors and church workers to participate in ALTS classes. Not only will they continue to grow professionally, but they also bring the value of experience to the classroom.

I also invite all members of The AALC to serve the Church as scouts to identify, encourage, and support men to consider the call to ordained ministry and encourage and support men and women to serve Christ's Church as trained church workers.

continued on page 3

## The Purpose continued...

### 3. Preparing church leaders for service in the Church and society.

ALTS also plays an essential role in preparing church leaders for their meaningful and essential role in the Church by providing solid theological education firmly grounded in the inerrant and infallible Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and sound practices. Therefore, our church workers have a distinctive Lutheran worldview to better serve our churches in The AALC.

Church workers trained at ALTS are equipped to serve not only their congregations but also their communities in which the congregations are located, as they bring that unique confessional biblically based worldview into social and ethical issues of our times.

### 4. Contributing to the academic community.

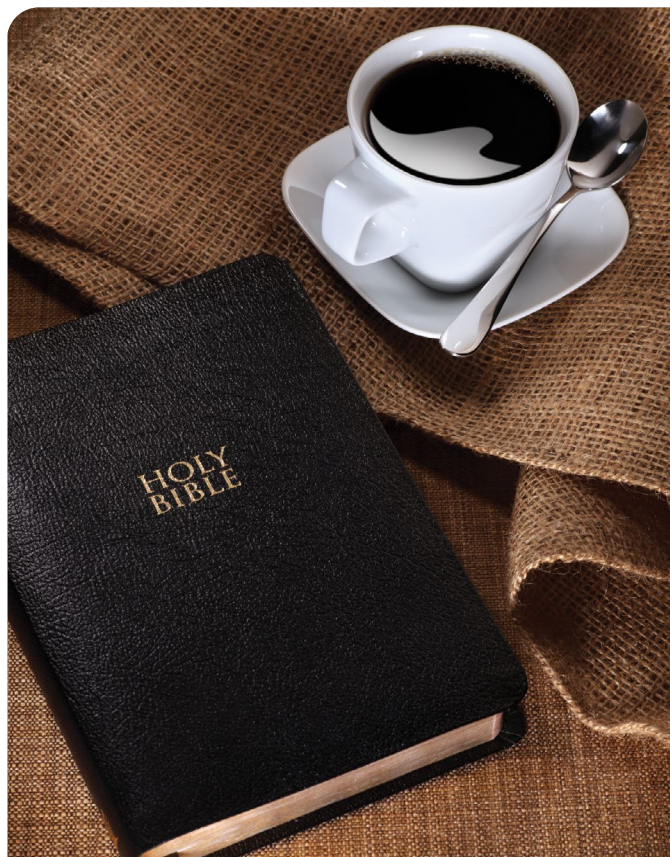
While addressing the primary purpose of our seminary to produce competent pastors and church workers for The AALC, I see great potential in the work of our faculty, our students, pastors, and church workers, that we possess the God-given means and talent to contribute and advance the knowledge and understanding of theology and religious studies through a solid confessional Lutheran foundation.

ALTS is focused on training pastors and leaders and has the potential to contribute to the theological academic community. Pray with me that ALTS continues attracting talented scholars and educators, fostering academic excellence that benefits the Church and the broader theological academic community.

### 5. Ensuring the future of The American Association of Lutheran Churches.

Finally, investing in the thriving ALTS is essential for ensuring the future of The AALC by providing properly trained candidates for the Office of Word and Sacrament. This was and is the mandate of our Association for the purpose of our seminary. As the Church faces challenges such as declining membership, declining seminary enrollments, and changing cultural contexts, it is more important than ever to have a solid and vibrant institution that can provide leadership and guidance through concrete and doctrinal Lutheran theological education. This is currently being achieved at ALTS through the traditional models of Lutheran education and by leveraging the gift of technology to benefit her students and the Association. A thriving seminary ensures the Church has a pipeline of well-trained pastors and leaders who, by the power of the Holy Spirit, are equipped to guide, tend, and feed the precious lambs of Christ Jesus through these challenging times and ensure fidelity to her Lord and Shepherd.

The need for thriving Lutheran seminaries cannot be overstated. The founders of our Association thought so, and we carry the



*Through rigorous academic training, practical experience, and mentoring relationships, ALTS provides pastors with the tools to lead their congregations in worship, pastoral care, evangelism, and discipleship.*

same zeal and dedication. The AALC's American Lutheran Theological Seminary is critical to the promotion and the conservation of confessional Lutheran theology, doctrine, and practice, equipping pastors to serve our congregations in the Office of Word and Sacrament, preparing leaders for service in the Church and society, contributing to the theological academic community, and ensuring the future of The AALC. Therefore, we must invest in the development of our beloved seminary, providing the resources and support necessary for her to thrive and intentionally identifying, encouraging, and supporting potential ALTS students for public ministry and service. By doing so, we ensure that The AALC remains a vibrant and thriving Lutheran body boldly proclaiming repentance and the forgiveness of sins through Christ Jesus into and beyond the 21st century, Lord willing. In the holy name of Jesus. Amen. †

*The Rev. Dr. Cary Larson serves as Presiding Pastor of The AALC.*

# ALTS PURSUES ACCREDITATION

By Rev. Dr. Jordan Cooper

*The existence and success of a seminary is directly linked to the health and growth of a church body. Without a seminary, pastors are not trained, and without pastors, congregations cannot survive. With this being the case, the stability of the American Lutheran Theological Seminary (ALTS) is of the utmost importance for the future of The AALC. As president of the seminary, I am working to ensure that our school provides the best possible theological education for many years to come. One of the ways that our seminary is trying to do this is through our pursuit of accreditation.*

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## Why Does Accreditation Matter?

I want to first answer the question that many might be thinking: is going through the lengthy and difficult process of accreditation worth it? The faculty and staff of ALTS answer this question with a resounding “yes!” Though it may sound to some like this is a new idea for our seminary, it has actually been a point of importance for the seminary from its inception. Though circumstances meant that this process was not pursued immediately, we are at a point where we are well-prepared to work our way through the process, and are now actively doing so.

Though there are many more benefits to accreditation than these, I want to summarize with three distinctive benefits of becoming an accredited institution. First, this process is making the policies, procedures, and record-keeping of ALTS far more structured and organized than it ever has been in the past. The standards required by accreditation agencies are not arbitrary, but are the product of decades of experience in higher education. This has improved the quality of the school immensely already, and will continue to do so as we go further through the process.

Second, we want to be able to train military chaplains for ministry. The government requires that chaplains attend an accredited institution for their theological education so as to assure that chaplains do not attend non-credible schools. We have had a number of inquiries about our seminary from those who are interested in chaplaincy, but have unfortunately not been able to provide an education which meets the government requirements. Accreditation will remove this barrier so that ALTS can provide chaplains to the church.

Third, receiving accredited status will assure the reputability of the seminary beyond the confines of The AALC. While the primary goal of our seminary is, and will remain, the training of future pastors for calls to congregations in The AALC, we also desire that our degrees can be used for other purposes. If, for example, one of our pastors wants to pursue further education, this will make acceptance into a doctoral program possible. Many doctoral programs require an accredited Masters degree for acceptance. Further, accreditation will improve the reputation of ALTS, and consequently The AALC, within the broader Church.

## Where We Are in the Process

Prior to my calling into the position of Seminary President, the prior President, Dr. Tom Stover, and the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) began to move into this process with the hiring of a consultant to highlight points of need in order for the institution to achieve accredited status. In her report, the consultant pointed us to a number of accreditation bodies that work with theological schools. I, along with members of the CHE, explored these various options, and we ultimately decided to work with the Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE).

One benefit of the ABHE is that they work with both graduate and undergraduate institutions, which differentiates them from some other bodies which work only with seminaries. Though there are no current plans to begin a Bible college, this working relationship does give us the possibility of doing so if we desire in the future. Further, the ABHE has values that strongly align with those of The AALC, including a commitment to the supreme authority of Scripture and the centrality of Christ. The ABHE also has worked with institutions that have models similar to ours, and they work well with distance learning programs. After attending a conference and meeting with a representative from the ABHE, the seminary leadership is convinced that we have chosen the right organization to work with through this process.

The ABHE divides the schools working with them by their place in the accreditation process into three distinct categories: pre-applicant status, applicant status, and candidate status. ALTS is currently in pre-applicant status. In order to achieve applicant status, the ABHE requires that an institution meets twenty-five conditions that are called the Conditions of Eligibility. Throughout this last year, ALTS has been working through each of these criteria in order to move into the next stage of the process. As of May 15, the application has been submitted to the ABHE. Though there is no definite timeline, it is expected that the entire process will take a total of eight to ten years.

As we pursue accreditation, we ask for your prayers and support. I, along with Dr. Curtis Leins, Dr. Chris Caughey, Rev. Jon Holst, Bonnie Ohlrich, and the entirety of the CHE are working hard to assure that this process goes as smoothly as possible. We continue to strive to give our pastors the best education we can so that they are equipped with the tools to serve our congregations well. †

*The Rev. Dr. Jordan Cooper is the President of American Lutheran Theological Seminary.*



# American Lutheran Theological Seminary

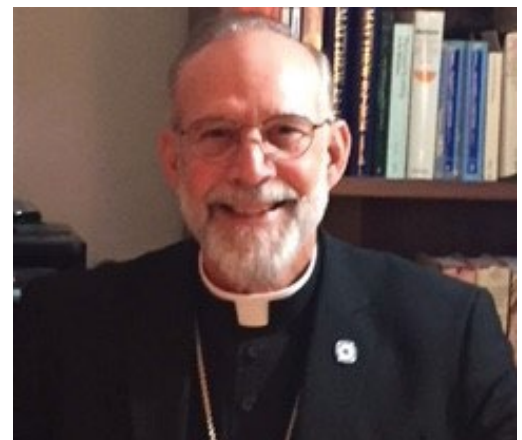
## Introducing the Faculty of American Lutheran Theological Seminary

By Rev. Jon Holst

*At American Lutheran Theological Seminary “Our programs support men seeking Ordination in Word and Sacrament ministry, along with both men and women of the laity desiring focused academic opportunities in Biblical Studies with a view to being equipped to serve faithfully in their vocations. (Matt 28:18-20, Col 1:9, 2 Tim 2:15)” (ALTS Student Guide, 2). In addition to our gifted adjunct faculty, ALTS is blessed with four core faculty members who provide outstanding academic scholarship and pastoral guidance to the students of ALTS – all of whom are, of course, committed to the inspired and inerrant Word of God and the Lutheran Confession as a correct exposition of that divine Word. It is my pleasure to take a moment and introduce you to our core faculty.*

Rev. Dr. Jordan Cooper, whom many of you know from his Just and Sinner YouTube channel, is president of the American Lutheran Theological Seminary and serves as Professor of Dogmatic Theology. He holds a Ph.D. from the South African Theological Seminary, where his doctoral thesis focused on defending the scholastic Lutheran theological method and critiquing what has come to be called “Radical Lutheranism.” Additionally, he earned an M.A. from the same institution, defending the Orthodox Lutheran Doctrine of God’s Law over and against the theology of Gerhard Forde. Dr. Cooper also holds an MTS from the American Lutheran Theological Seminary, an M.Th. from the Wittenberg Institute, where his thesis evaluated Early Patristic Soteriology in light of the New Perspective on Paul, and a B.A. in Biblical Studies from Geneva College. With his extensive educational background, Dr. Cooper is well-equipped to lead and instruct the students of ALTS.

Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins – previous Presiding Pastor of The AALC – serves ALTS as Professor of Theology and Spiritual Formation. He holds a Ph.D. in Church History with distinction from Temple University, as well as an M.A. in Religious Studies from the same institution. Dr. Leins also holds a Th.M. in Church History from Duke University, an M.Div. from Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, and a B.A. in Philosophy and Sociology from Lenoir-Rhyne College. With a wealth of academic and practical experience that has come from serving as a faithful undershepherd of Christ and His Church for nearly five decades, Dr. Leins is highly respected and regarded by his students and brother pastors alike for his insightful teaching.



Top: Rev. Dr. Jordan Cooper: President of the American Lutheran Theological Seminary

Bottom: Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins: Professor of Theology and Spiritual Formation

*We encourage you to keep these men in your prayers as they strive, by the grace of God, to raise up the next generation of faithful Lutheran pastors and lay servants!*



## Faculty continued...

Our current Presiding Pastor, Rev. Dr. Cary Larson, serves ALTS as Professor of Practical Theology. He holds a D.Min. from the Institute of Lutheran Theology, as well as an M.Div. from Luther Seminary and a Bachelor of Science from the University of Minnesota. In 2022, Dr. Larson was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity from the American Lutheran Theological Seminary, highlighting his esteemed contributions to the field of practical theology – especially in the area of men’s ministry.

Lastly, Rev. Dr. Chris Caughey serves ALTS as Professor of Church History. He holds a Ph.D. in Church History from Trinity College Dublin, where he completed his dissertation on Puritan Responses to Antinomianism in the Context of Reformed Covenant Theology. Prior to this, he earned his M.Div. from Westminster Theological Seminary in California and a B.A. in Christian Education from Biola University in California. After colloquy with The AALC, Rev. Dr. Caughey was ordained into the Office of the Holy Ministry on December 11, 2022, and installed as the pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church (AALC) in Augusta, KY, and Trinity Lutheran Church (LC-MS) in Maysville, KY.

We encourage you to keep these men in your prayers as they strive, by the grace of God, to raise up the next generation of faithful Lutheran pastors and lay servants! †

*The Rev. Jon Holst is the new Administrator of American Lutheran Theological Seminary. He also serves as pastor of St. Luke the Evangelist Lutheran Church, Jurupa Valley, CA.*



Top: Rev. Dr. Cary Larson: Professor of Practical Theology

Middle: Rev. Dr. Chris Caughey: Professor of Church History

Bottom: Rev. Jon Holst: Administrator of American Lutheran Theological Seminary



Adjunct Professors Left to Right: Dr. Nathan Greeley teaches Systematic Theology (Apologetics). Rev. Mike Badenhop teaches Hermeneutics. Rev. Dave Spotts teaches Greek.



# ALTS FINANCIAL CHALLENGE

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*Rev. Dr. Curtis E. Leins*

## **ALTS Has An Essential Place**

The American Lutheran Theological Seminary (ALTS) has an essential place in confessional Lutheran theological education. The ALTS statement of faith confesses Holy Scripture as the infallible, inerrant, and inspired Word of God, and subscribes to the Lutheran Confessions because they are the right exposition of the Bible. Unfortunately, many Lutheran seminaries do not make this essential statement of faith. These are two of the four founding principles of The AALC, along with our commitment to the authority of the local congregation, and the primacy of evangelism and missions.

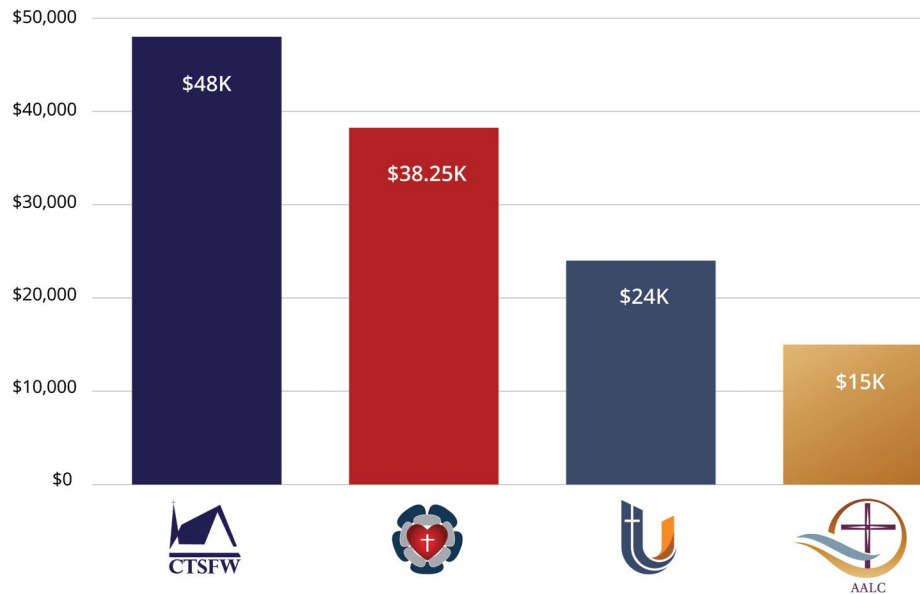
American Lutheran Theological Seminary is dedicated to instilling these four principles in the lives of our seminary students. Over the years, ALTS has developed another distinctive in our seminary education. The seminary's goal is to care for seminarians personally in such a way that seminarians develop Christian character and pastoral care for others, based upon the ministry example of Jesus. Faculty and students discuss the role of the "Seelsorger" (soul care-giver), and what it means to sacrifice and serve for the sake of the Gospel. These distinctives make ALTS a unique and essential place of theological and spiritual preparation for Lutheran congregational ministry.

ALTS has a successful history. In addition to a residential Master of Divinity, ALTS Online offers a number of Master's Degree programs, taught by recognized and respected Lutheran theologians. Graduates of the online programs include men who have been rostered and ordained as Lutheran Clergy in The AALC, as well as women and men who have been called to serve as Commissioned Church Workers, Deaconesses, and in other offices of Christian service. All of this is done at a cost that is a fraction of comparable Lutheran theological institutions.





## Master of Divinity Degree



This graph above shows comparative costs in thousands for an online Master of Divinity Degree at Concordia, Ft. Wayne, \$48,000 (Ft. Wayne's online degree is called SMP, an abbreviated degree for special ministries); Institute of Lutheran Theology, \$38,250; United Lutheran Seminary, \$24,000, and American Lutheran Theological Seminary, \$15,000.

ALTS is committed to providing quality theological education at an affordable price. ALTS recognizes that 80% of all Christian congregations have fewer than 80 people. Many congregations have difficulty paying their pastor a full salary. Saddling a seminary graduate with tens of thousands of dollars of debt is discouraging, distressing, and disincentivizing. ALTS wants to give students every reason to come to its seminary! That is why the cost of a seminary education at ALTS is approximately half the cost of comparable Lutheran institutions.

In real numbers, the actual cost per student, per course, is approximately \$1750. ALTS provides scholarship money for every student, for every course, of approximately \$1250. In that way, ALTS is able to charge a student only \$500 per course!

### The Financial Situation

The ALTS annual seminary budget is \$228,000. The budget provides salary for the Seminary President, a Professor of Theology, an Administrator, a Registrar, and a Secretary. The budget supports the two full-time faculty members mentioned above, plus four adjunct faculty, along with office supplies, rental space, travel expenses, and more. Our projected income per year is \$37,000 from tuition and \$25,000 from congregations and individuals. In order to balance our budget, The AALC National Convention approved a transfer of approximately \$166,000 annually from seminary reserve funds.

In the last couple of years, ALTS has received some unexpected but much needed funding. As of March of 2023, our seminary has approximately \$214,000 in the Seminary Support Fund, \$258,000 in

the Seminary Scholarship Fund, and \$224,000 in the General Fund. That is a total of \$696,000! This is the best position that we have had for many years. However, at our current rate of expense, we will deplete these reserves in a little more than four years.

### What We Need

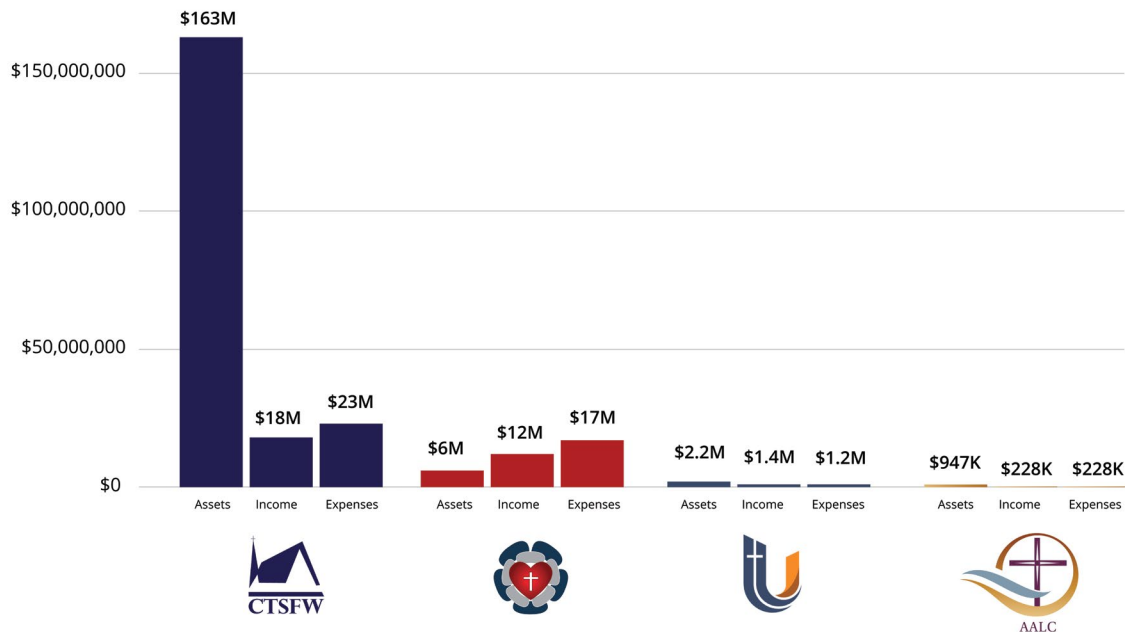
At the 2022 AALC General Convention, ALTS presented a fundraising challenge called "Sola 500." The seminary asked the members of our church body to give \$25 per month or \$300 per year to the seminary. 500 members, giving \$300 each, will provide the seminary with \$150,000 annually. Sola 500 member contributions support seminary staff and professors' salaries, contract services, an annual audit, and more. To date, approximately \$50,000 has been pledged for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. Many of our Sola 500 members have paid the \$300 in full, while others have elected to make monthly payments, while some have pledged and not yet made their payments. We have also, during this past year, received approximately \$58,000 in one-time gifts, as well as gifts over and above the pledged amounts. Thus, from July 1, 2022, thru May 31, 2023, we have received approximately \$102,000 for the Sola 500 campaign.

Sola 500 is off to a terrific start! Because of the generosity of our contributors, we have reached almost 2/3 of our financial goal for this fiscal year, even though we are only at about 25% of our goal of 500 Sola 500 members. Thanks be to God!

Our immediate goal today is to solicit additional support to reach our goal of 500 Sola 500 members. If you are not already a Sola 500 member, would you please prayerfully consider becoming one? If you are already a Sola 500 member, we encourage you to renew your pledge for the next fiscal year.

In addition, beginning in the Summer of 2023, AALC congregations will be asked to offer annual support to the seminary through "The Philippians Project." This program encourages congregations to

## Assets, Income and Expenses



create one fundraiser per year for ALTS. The goal is for the church body to raise \$60,000 annually.

The Philippians Project will support the cost of ALTS General Program Expenses including: Zoom online classes and meetings, internet software and support, website maintenance and development, JSTOR online library, social media promotions, travel and marketing expenses, and an annual seminarians' intensive study retreat.

These two programs stand immediately before you, Sola 500 and The Philippians Project. When they both are fully funded, ALTS will receive \$210,000 annually. When student tuition fees are added to that amount, ALTS will be able to fully support itself each year.

As wonderful as it will be when Sola 500 and The Philippians Project enable us to meet our annual budget, living year to year is not a sustainable way for a seminary to support itself.

The above graph indicates, in millions, the total assets, income, and expenses of four seminaries:

Concordia Seminary's total assets are \$163 M, its income is \$18 M per year, and expenses are \$23 M. United Lutheran Seminary's total assets are \$6 M, its income is \$12 M annually, and its expenses are \$17 M. (Faculty salaries are 4.54 M). ILT's total assets are \$2.2 M, its income is \$1.4 M, and its expenses are \$1.2M. ALTS' total assets are \$947,000, its annual income is \$228,000, and its expenses are \$228,000.

ALTS needs greater assets in order to increase its security and sustainability. Specifically, we wish to provide an additional stream of revenue in the form of endowment earnings. The endowments themselves will be kept by The AALC Foundation. But, the earnings from the endowments will serve as direct support for student scholarships and seminary ministries. A \$500,000 endowment will generate enough money to provide seven seminarians with tuition

each year. A \$1 M endowment will generate enough money to provide 14 seminarians with tuition each year. A \$1 million endowment also could support a Professor's or President's Chair. Endowment gifts are given in order to ensure the sustainability of the seminary, knowing full well that as the seminary goes, so goes The AALC.

Our goal is to receive three to five million dollars in hand or in pledge within the next five years. Admittedly, this is a profound commitment. Some may be able to contribute significant funds today. For others, such a legacy cannot be funded until years in the future. But, that is the point; we must plan for years in the future. How can you and I provide a Bible-believing Lutheran seminary that will train faithful pastors for years to come? What can we do today so that this church body and the things that we believe may continue to exist for many years, even after we are gone? You can leave such a legacy. This is the challenge that is set before you today. Will you contribute to the short-term needs of our seminary through Sola 500? Will you consider an endowment contribution that will create a legacy that maintains a strong and steadfast seminary and a faithful AALC for generations to come?

As St. Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth, 2 Cor. 9:7: "Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver."

Seminary President, Dr. Jordan Cooper; AALC Foundation Chairman, Mr. Doug Taylor; and I ask for your prayers of support for our seminary. Also, we are glad to answer any questions that you might have regarding Sola 500, The Philippians Project, or the possibility of funding an endowment program for our seminary.

Thank you for your prayerful support! †

*The Rev. Dr. Curtis E. Leins is the Professor of Theology and Spiritual Formation at ALTS.*



# American Lutheran Theological Seminary



## The Academic Programs of American Lutheran Theological Seminary

By Rev. Jon Holst

Training future pastors and other Church workers is one of the most important tasks of the Christian Church. Jesus Himself set the example for this: spending three years preparing the apostles to be the first pastors of His Church. We also see that pattern of teaching successive generations of pastors when St. Paul writes to Titus and tells him to appoint elders (that is, presbyters or what we usually call pastors today) and emphasizes that such a man must “hold firm to the trustworthy word *as taught*, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9 *emphasis added*).

So, from the Apostolic age onward, the Church has provided robust theological education to her future pastors, as well as other Church workers, and The American Association of Lutheran Churches is no exception! American Lutheran Theological Seminary (ALTS) is blessed to be able to provide three online masters-level programs to ensure that men who are preparing for the Office of the Holy Ministry, men and women who desire to serve the Church in lay vocations, or those who simply desire to pursue a graduate education in theology, are given a thorough theological education based on Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

The Master of Divinity (MDiv) program is designed specifically for men who are qualified to prepare for the pastoral office (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). It is a 90-credit program (30 classes) that includes coursework in the primary theological disciplines of exegetical theology (Biblical interpretation), systematic theology (Christian doctrine), historical theology, and pastoral theology. In addition, MDiv students will, after completion of a portion of the program, be placed as vicars in a congregation where they will receive practical experience and guidance from supervising pastors as they continue their studies. Upon successful completion of the program, the men may then apply to the Clergy Commission of The AALC for ordination.

The Master of Arts in Religion (MAR) program is designed for laity who are preparing for service as commissioned Church workers. This would include deacons, deaconesses, youth ministry directors, and missionaries. MAR students complete 30 credits and a six credit Master’s Thesis. 24 of these credits are foundational courses in Old and New Testament, the Lutheran Confessions, and Church history. The remaining units focus on either Outreach, Pedagogy, or Administration, depending on the student’s interests and desired area of service.

Lastly, ALTS offers a Master of Arts in Theology (MAT). This is a graduate academic degree in theology that is open to both Lutheran and non-Lutheran students. Like the MAR, it is a 36-credit program with the final six credits being the Master’s Thesis. Students may follow the General Studies track which incorporates courses from all theological disciplines equally, or students may concentrate in Exegetical, Doctrinal, or Historical Studies in accord with their area of interest.

In addition to the three degree programs, those desiring to grow in their Christian faith, expand their knowledge of Holy Scripture, or take a deep dive into Lutheran doctrine and practice may audit a class for a nominal fee.

Our purpose at American Lutheran Theological Seminary is to “provide quality Christian education to working adults seeking a spiritually-formative theological education which reflects the beliefs and mission of The AALC” (ALTS Handbook, 2). We are your seminary and will continue – by God’s grace, with the help of the Holy Spirit, and with the support of God’s people – to train up faithful servants of Christ’s Church for many years to come. †

*The Rev. Jon Holst is the Pastor of St. Luke the Evangelist Lutheran Church in Jurupa Valley, CA, and serves part-time as the Administrator of American Lutheran Theological Seminary.*



# American Lutheran Theological Seminary



## Summer Classes Offered by ALTS

By Rev. Dr. Curtis E. Leins

During the Summer Quarter of 2023, American Lutheran Theological Seminary is offering two exciting courses: P141–Leading Lutheran Liturgy, and H101–Church History Overview.

### Leading Lutheran Liturgy

P141–Leading Lutheran Liturgy is a hands-on, practical course for seminarians and pastors. The course was conducted as a Summer Intensive of only four days, June 19–22, at Calvary Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN.

Leading Lutheran Liturgy was taught by Dr. Jordan Cooper, Pr. Jon Holst, and Dr. Curtis Leins. The course included: detailed information regarding the history and conduct of the Divine Liturgy and various occasional services; the choice of appropriate hymnody and music; the training of liturgical assistants and altar guild servers; and the purpose and placement of chancel and altar furnishing, linens, and vessels. Instructional lectures and practical experience were provided regarding the history and significance of prayers and preparations done by clergy and liturgical assistants prior to leading worship, chancel appointments and clergy vestments, and the role of the pastor in music selection and leadership.

Other important topics that were addressed included: Jewish antecedents to Christian eucharistic worship, patristic and medieval sacrificial theology and verbiage, Luther's revisions of the Divine Service, and the nature of sacred time and sacred space. The course was limited to M.Div. candidates of ALTS and AALC rostered clergy.

### Church History Overview

A second course is offered by ALTS this summer, H101–Church History Overview, taught by Dr. Leins and Dr. Chris Caughey. This will be a 10-week course, offered online on Tuesday nights, from July 11 through September 12.

Church History Overview is a course that will satisfy requirements for students who are already in ALTS degree programs, but also is especially appropriate for persons who would like to explore the possibility of becoming students at ALTS. The course will review the history of the Christian church from its inception to today by examining prominent movements, persons, doctrines, and institutions, using both secondary and primary source materials. Special emphasis will be placed upon adherence to the Holy Scriptures in the faith and life of the church, in spite of facing various crises and conflicts, hierarchs and heresies.

Students will be given a broad understanding of: the development of the church during the time of the ante-nicene, nicene, and post-nicene fathers; the canonization process of Scripture; the development of the Roman Catholic Church; the Great Schism of the East and West; the Protestant Reformation; and the movements toward unity in the modern era.

If you are interested in registering for this course, please contact the National Office or register online. †

*The Rev. Dr. Curtis E. Leins is the Professor of Theology and Spiritual Formation at ALTS.*



# American Lutheran Theological Seminary



## Adding Biblical Theology to the ALTS Curriculum

By Dr. Chris Caughey

This Spring quarter, I began teaching biblical theology in the Pentateuch course. Biblical theology is a unique discipline compared to systematic theology, historical theology, and practical theology. Whereas systematic theology gathers all the relevant biblical data on a particular topic and relates that particular topic to other theological topics, biblical theology traces the growth and development of God's revelation in history from Genesis to Revelation. Put differently, we can conceive of systematic theology as a circle, logically relating each theological topic to all the others—most importantly, relating each theological topic to Christology, since Jesus says that he exegetes (or explains the meaning of) the Father to us (John 1:18). We can conceive of biblical theology as the line of history with various important milestones along the way. Both systematic theology and biblical theology are necessary disciplines, and they each need the other.

If we were to use the analogy of a fruit tree, we could observe that all of the genetic information about the full-grown fruit tree is contained in the seed. And yet, the tree develops over time as a sprout from the seed, a green sapling, a young tree with new branches, and eventually a full-grown tree with buds that produce fruit. In the same way, all of the genetic information about the ultimate kingdom of God is contained in Genesis 1 and 2. Consider how Colossians 1:16 interprets Genesis 1:1, and how Hebrews 3 and 4 interpret Genesis 2:2-3. At the same time, in Genesis 1, we have the kingdoms of light and dark, sky and sea, and land, with various creature-kings provided by God to rule over (Gen. 1:16, 18) those kingdoms, with God enthroned as the great king over his entire creation in Genesis 2:1-3. Another way of expressing this is to say that eschatology comes before

soteriology — and eschatology intersects the line of history at every point along the way.

Since Adam plunged humanity into the condition of sin and corruption by his disobedience, we have the seed of redemption in Genesis 3:15. In that verse, God promises that the Savior would die in order to defeat sin, death, and the devil. But in that verse, we do not yet know the name of the Savior, the fact that He would be Jewish, and that He would be unjustly condemned and put to death on a Roman cross for the sins of the entire world. But we learn more about this Savior, as time goes on, in Genesis 12-15, the book of Ruth, 2 Samuel 7, and the prophets.

To give just one concrete example of how biblical theology traces themes through history, let us observe that after the Fall, God placed an angel with a flaming sword to guard the entrance to the garden. It is interesting to observe how swords or blades function in God's revelation as history moves forward. Blades are used to slaughter animals for sacrifice to the Lord. Blades are also used in the Old Testament sacrament of circumcision. Swords are used as instruments of judgment as Israel prepares the miniature picture of the kingdom of God in Canaan for the holiness of God's presence. And St. Paul interprets the ultimate revelation of God's judgment — the cross of Christ — as the circumcision of Christ. In other words, Jesus submitted to the judgment of God's sword/blade in order to restore fellowship and communion between God and humanity. Thanks be to God for such rich stories and insight. †

*The Rev. Dr. Chris Caughey is an instructor at ALTS and serves the congregations of St. Paul Ev. Lutheran Church (TAALC), Augusta, KY, and Trinity Lutheran Church (LC-MS), Maysville, KY.*



# American Lutheran Theological Seminary



## Student Recruitment

*By Rev. Dr. Jordan Cooper*

For many years, we have prayed for an increase in student enrollment at the American Lutheran Theological Seminary (ALTS). As our pastors have aged, we have needed to secure a ministerium for years to come to preside over the pulpits and altars of our churches. Our online program has, for years now, been addressing this concern, as we have several pastors now serving in congregations in The AALC who have gotten their degree from ALTS' distance program. We are now at a point where we are not only ready to sustain our current number of students, but to grow.

While we have had growth at different points in the past, there has been a unique explosion of student interest in the last two years that has caused the student population to more than double from 16 just two years ago to the enrollment of our current Spring quarter at 36. There are several reasons for this, and lessons that we can learn moving forward in order to continue this trajectory of growth in all of our degree programs.

In order for a program to increase in size—especially to double—the infrastructure needs to be in place for the school to accommodate such growth. When I initially received the position as Seminary President, I made the decision to focus first on getting our systems more organized before prioritizing marketing. The worst thing for us would be to have exponential growth without the ability to care for that larger number of students. Because of the hard work that Dr. Tom Stover, the Rev. Rich Shields, and Duane Kleven put in to bring our seminary to the place where it was at when I received a call to this position, that infrastructure took a relatively brief time to get into place.

The marketing strategy since that time has been rather simple. I began giving some advertisements for the Seminary and our upcoming courses on social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. This alone has led to dozens of individuals

contacting the seminary for further information. Along with these general advertisements for the seminary, we have also had some more specific plans to bring awareness to our programs.

The first to mention here is that we have decided to set aside our summer quarter as a time to offer introductory courses that are applicable to those who are not yet involved in a degree program. This means that we advertise our summer course as a chance to audit a class through the seminary. Students are given the opportunity to attend classes for a minimal fee in order to get an idea of what our program is like. This will then lead to some of those students deciding to pursue one of our degree programs.

The second part of our strategy is to use our YouTube channel to raise awareness of our school and its programs. Dr. Curtis Leins has been recording videos of devotions based on the lectionary reading for that upcoming Sunday. The channel currently has 280 subscribers, and over 1,000 people have watched the video about our Prolegomena course from last summer. We hope to get a similarly high number of views on a video advertising our intro to church history course this upcoming summer of 2023.

I also do have to mention the impact of the lockdowns of 2020 on online education. While at one time, online courses were viewed with skepticism, many universities began offering courses through Zoom simply because they had to comply with regulations surrounding COVID-19. As people have become more comfortable with the online classroom format, the reputability of these distance courses has grown. There is more interest in online education than ever before. Along with marketing, this is also an undoubted factor in the increase in interest in ALTS.

With this significant growth, there are also new challenges. One of the benefits of our program is our small class sizes. This allows

## Student Recruitment continued...

for professors to answer individual student questions, and allows for discussion among students which does not become overwhelming. Because of that, as class numbers increase, we will begin to divide classes in order to retain the small classroom environment. Our History of Christian Worship class last semester had 27 students, which led to Dr. Leins offering both an evening and morning option for the course. As we have large numbers of students in future courses, we will use this same method to divide up students.

While we can, and should, celebrate the number of students that God has sent to us in these last two years, this is not the end. We need continual enrollment of students in order to assure that we will both fill classes and provide workers for the church for years to come. Please pray that God would continue to send us students, and guide the faculty and staff of ALTS to remain faithful to the calling given to us. †

*The Rev. Dr. Jordan Cooper is the President of American Lutheran Theological Seminary.*

# American Lutheran Theological Seminary

Meet the Students: Introducing a few from our growing student body at ALTS



*Dr. Rob Belde. Submitted photo.*

## Dr. Rob Belde

*Degree pursuing: Master of Arts in Theology (MAT)*

I'm originally from South St. Paul, MN, and currently live in Brockport, NY. My wife Barb and I have been married for 24 years. Barb is also from Minnesota. We have two daughters: Frannie (19) and Josie (16). Frannie is a sophomore in college, studying psychology.

I am a clinical psychologist (Psy.D). I retired from active duty after 21 years of combined uniformed service in the U.S. Public Health Service (13 years, rank of Commander) and the U.S. Air Force (8 years, rank of Major). I continue to work full-time as a psychologist.

I majored in Theology in college and have maintained a strong passion for theology ever since. I applied to the seminary to deepen my knowledge of confessional Lutheranism, to grow in faith, and to discover ways I might be of service to the church.

I am early in my graduate studies and just completed Theological Prolegomena and The Bible in Context. I enjoyed both of these courses very much; you might say one concentrated on sola fide and the other on sola scriptura! Every week of class I looked forward to seeing and interacting with my professors and fellow students via ZOOM. I felt "at home" with everyone from day one and I thank God that he has given me the opportunity to study at the ALTS. †



*Seminarian Steve Wiebe with his wife, Jennifer, and their three children: Luke, Sophia, and Claire. Submitted photo.*

## Steve Wiebe

*Degree Pursuing: Master of Divinity*

My wife, Jennifer and I have been married 21 years. We have three children, Luke and Sophia (twins, age 16) and Claire (age 9). We currently live in Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada.

I'm planning to complete the MDiv program with ALTS in June 2023.

Many thanks to Dr. Cooper, Dr. Leins, Dr. Caughey, and all the other professors, staff, and students who make this program excellent.

The AALC's confession of faith and ALTS online accessibility brought me into the program. It is my hope to service the Church as "a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine" (1 Tim 4:6). †



# Church News



*Kirill Nazarov (front row, blue suit) has been the organist at Calvary Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN, for two years. He was recently baptized into the faith with the congregation standing up for him as family. Submitted photo.*

## From Russia With Love

By Rev. Joe Marsh

Organists are hard to find and good organists even harder. Not so long ago our regular organist moved farther away from the church and was unable to continue playing. He was great, and we wondered who we could possibly get to replace him.

We posted a “help wanted” ad at a local music store, and a young man named Kirill Nararov answered the ad. He was pretty young for an organist, so we wondered if he could really play. We discovered he really could! He is a concert pianist.

We learned other things about him. For one thing, he is a Russian immigrant and had been in the United States for only a few years.

He had been on his own from a young age in Russia and was only able to get into a good school in Russia because of his soccer skills. That dream ended when he was injured and could no longer play.

Even though he never intended to be a musician, he needed some skill in order to stay in the school. Kiri began taking music lessons from a woman who agreed to teach him piano for eight hours a day at no cost. He worked at it very hard and within six months was playing in competitions.

He received a scholarship to Shattuck St. Mary’s High School in Faribault, MN, and came to America without much more than the clothes on his back.

After graduating from Shattuck St. Mary’s, he was set to go to the Royal Conservatory of Music in Canada. Unfortunately, COVID-19 hit, and the border was closed. He became terribly depressed, alone, with nowhere to live, no income, no family, and seriously considered suicide. He credits a young woman about his age with

a Ukrainian/Russian mother as being his “guardian angel.” She helped him and put him in touch with others who could help.

He had no religious background as a child, not even Russian Orthodox, so there has been a learning curve with playing liturgy and religious music. However, he is a quick study and in a very short time began to understand how church music is different from classical, pop, or concert music.

He began attending our Sunday morning adult Bible Study and was moved by what he heard, especially about God being His spiritual Father and Jesus being his Savior from sin.

After being with our congregation for about a year, I asked him if he was interested in being baptized. He was both surprised and excited. On the day of his baptism, he had no one with him. I looked at the congregation and asked for his family to stand. Everyone in the congregation stood up.

He has completed our Adult Instruction Class along with three other adults and will soon be an adult, communicant member of Calvary Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN.

We have celebrated two birthdays with him. He is now 23 years old and is a beloved member of God’s Kingdom and a beloved member of Calvary’s family.

A video of Kirill playing the piano can be found on YouTube by searching “Chopin Ballade No. 1 G Minor -- Kirill Nazarov, A Boy Who Plays the Piano.” †

*The Rev. Joe Marsh serves Calvary Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN.*





# Women of L.I.F.E. Hosts Baby Shower Fundraiser

July 2023  
PRAYER BOOKMARK



Top Left and Right - Attendees dressed up and enjoying the festivities. Middle Right - The centerpiece of each table was a tray of baby items for the memory game. All items were donated to APC.  
Bottom Left - Decorations for the shower. Bottom Right - A table of delicious goodies awaits the guests.

St. Peter's Women of L.I.F.E. held a baby shower for Alternatives Pregnancy Center (APC). The ladies in attendance enjoyed tea, tiny sandwiches, scones, tartlets, chips and fruit. Shower games included seeing who could come up with the most boys and girls names from the Bible and trying to remember all the baby items in the tray after it is covered. All the items on the trays were then donated to APC to be distributed to moms for their babies.

Note cards were provided for guests to write notes of encouragement to the moms. A pre-printed scripture card was included in each note.

The shower included a diaper collection and other baby gifts. Prior to the shower, APC supplied baby bottles which members of the congregation picked up to fill with coins. Many were returned with bills or even checks.

It was a lovely afternoon for a wonderful cause. We praise God for these moms who chose life for their babies. We pray that they will know His love through the gifts we give. †

St. Peter's Lutheran Church is located in Elk Grove, CA.

1. Steve Griffing, MAR, GA
2. Youth, Chaperones, Speakers traveling to/from the Youth Conference
3. Alex Lancaster, MDiv, WI
4. Guy Henderson, auditing classes, PA
5. Future Needs of ALTS
6. Andrew Aulner, MAT, NE
7. American Lutheran Theological Seminary
8. John Linch, MDiv, IA
9. Robert Belde, MAT, NY
10. Rev. Dr. Cary G. Larson, Presiding Pastor and ALTS professor
11. James O'Flannery, MDiv, OH
12. Karyn Guido, MAT, WA (currently in Ecuador)
13. The AALC Youth Conference in Estes Park, CO
14. Rev. Dr. Jordan Cooper, ALTS President
15. Alex Escarciga, MAT, TX
16. Rev. Dr. Curtis E. Leins, ALTS Professor
17. Aaron Overly-Graham, MDiv, IL
18. Those considering Master of Divinity
19. Brian Ruuska, MAT, MN
20. Martha Stone, MAT, IA
21. Jacob Schaeffer, MDiv, IN
22. Joel Guido, MAR, WA (currently in Ecuador)
23. Frank Anderson, MDiv, NE
24. Sidney "Remy" Sheppard, MDiv, NC
25. Rev. Dr. Chris Caughey, ALTS Professor
26. Jim Belles, MDiv, TN
27. Chris Streeper, MDiv, OH
28. Rev. Jon Holst, ALTS Administrator
29. Tracy Stringfellow, MDiv, TX
30. College & University Campus Chaplains
31. For God to Raise Up Church Leaders

MAT: Master of Arts in Theology  
MAR: Master of Arts in Religion  
MDiv: Master of Divinity



# August 2023

## PRAYER BOOKMARK

1. Jonathan Blair, MDiv, NC
2. Dr. Nathan Greeley, ALTS Professor
3. Joshua Swigart, MDiv, OR
4. Michael Cruz, auditing classes, TX
5. Steve Wiebe, MDiv; British Columbia, Canada
6. Matthew Brokke, MDiv, ID
7. Doug Stone, MAT, IA
8. Those Considering Master of Arts in Religion [MAR]
9. Kris Johnson, MDiv, MD
10. Others who are studying for degrees at ALTS
11. Lannie Williams, MDiv, MI
12. Chris Clarke, MDiv, MD
13. Those Considering Master of Arts in Theology [MAT]
14. Mathew Young, MDiv, NC
15. Nic Ford, applicant for MDiv program, AL
16. Gage Garlinhouse, MDiv, OH
17. Commission for Higher Education
18. For all Seminary Students
19. To enlist five hundred Sola 500 Sponsors
20. Jonathan Guido, MDiv, WA (currently in Ecuador)
21. Cameron Swanson, pursuing colloquy, VA
22. Rev. Dave Spotts, ALTS Professor
23. The AALC Ministerium
24. ALTS Instrutors
25. Erin Overly-Graham, auditing classes, IL
26. Tait Halverson, MDiv, New York
27. Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry
28. Chad Zimmerman, MDiv, CO (currently in Russia)
29. Pastors & Church workers
30. Rev. Mike Badenhop, ALTS Professor
31. Charles Upole, Old MTS program, OH

MAT: Master of Arts in Theology  
 MAR: Master of Arts in Religion  
 MDiv: Master of Divinity

## How Can We Do More with Less?

By Rev. Steven Smeback



We all wonder at times if we are really making a difference. We wonder how we can reach more folks in a day and age where so many are losing touch with God. Many of our congregations are small. We feel insignificant, constrained in terms of programs, funds, and people to help. How can we do more to help those in need?

Remember David? With King Saul's anxious and trembling army far behind him, David alone, armed with a sling, a stone, and trust in God, stood before the nine-foot giant Goliath and struck him dead. Like David, even the smallest of churches can make a difference.

Indeed, there are many ways congregations can and do support noteworthy existing ministries. But what I suggest is that there is a new paradigm in how we evaluate and choose ministries we support. In fact, there is no need to duplicate or reinvent existing ministries.

What I have found is that all around us there are individuals providing highly effective, custom-built, and personalized services for others, fulfilling God's greatest commandment in their own unique way. I see these as "specialized ministries," Spirit-inspired and deeply effective. However, once identified, rather than trying to duplicate a ministry, small congregations like Elim Lutheran Church can take these specialized ministries under their wings—join in their passion, encourage them, support them, and help them when they need it. Together, these mission-driven individuals and supportive congregations achieve a positive and heartfelt impact on the lives they touch.

*“...all around us there are individuals providing highly effective, custom-built, and personalized services for others, fulfilling God’s greatest commandment in their own unique way.”*



Take Lois Ann and Wayne Davisson, for example. Lois Ann and her husband have been playing for Elim Sunday services since 1998. Over time their participation at Elim grew and evolved; they have become much appreciated and irreplaceable contributors in church services, activities, and celebrations. Lois Ann and Wayne were professional musicians and for years considered their music mostly as a form of entertainment, until one day, they had an epiphany.

They were playing at a retirement home—Wayne at the piano, Lois Ann at the violin. Then something happened. When they segued to “In the Garden,” an elderly woman suddenly joined in singing, “And He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own.”<sup>1</sup> Astonished residents exchanged quizzical glances: no one had ever heard her speak before. It was then Lois Ann and Wayne realized the music, “had opened up something inside her,” that there was a profound power in music.

Music is a gift God had blessed them with. It brings comfort and joy in a way that other methods simply cannot. Thus, their music became their passion, a lifelong ministry to bring comfort and joy to all, young and old, but especially elderly and invalid folks. Recognizing this, Elim took them under the wings of the church, encouraging and supporting them through the years.

As Lois Ann and Wayne grew in their ministry, Elim grew in its support. When Wayne had a stroke, the men’s group quickly went to work. So Wayne could come and go and get around their property more easily, they built a ramp and railing to the Davisson home entrance and a sidewalk to their horse barn. Another parishioner came to their rescue when their car needed repair; another, landscaping and lawn maintenance. One year

the congregation purchased a more portable electric violin for Lois Ann, one that was lighter and safer to take back and forth when the couple played at nursing homes. When they needed rides, someone from the congregation always stepped up to help.

Since Wayne’s passing in 2017, Lois Ann, now 83, has steadfastly carried on their music ministry. Lois Ann regularly plays her accordion at adult care and nursing homes. She gets to know the residents there personally so she can tailor the music just for them. And, for those who are unable to leave their rooms, she and her trusty accordion go directly to them. When the church council found out Lois Ann needed a smaller, lighter accordion, they decided to help her. Their mission: Get Lois Ann a new accordion that she could more easily transport and carry to the rooms of the residents she so selflessly served.

What drives any specialized ministry is the Spirit-inspired person who picks it up and persists in it. It becomes a lifelong passion for them. Their ministry is custom built, tailor-made, and personal—oftentimes, just one person at a time.

Moreover, what Lois Ann and others like her do can be done in any field: carpentry, drama, education, you name it. The important thing is that when God brings such people to you, you must recognize their gift, encourage them, and support them—passionately and persistently.

We all, large or small, rich or poor, can make a profoundly personal impact in this world (and surely make God smile), even if, or maybe especially since, it’s one person at a time. †

*The Rev. Steven Smeback serves Elim Lutheran Church, Brush Prairie, WA.*

<sup>1</sup> C. Austin Miles, “In the Garden,” accessed May 9, 2023, via [www.hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org).

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### UPCOMING EDITIONS...

Please be in prayer for and consider contributing to these upcoming editions:

**Sep/Oct 2023: Youth Edition** (*deadline July 1*)

**Nov/Dec 2023: Advent and Christmas** (*deadline Sept. 1*)

#### Church News:

*The Evangel* welcomes submissions of what's happening in your congregation. To submit content, **email the editor** Gretchen Baker: theevangel@taalc.org

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