

# knightwatch weekly



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MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE

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MLS / St. James-Portage MI

## Counselor Thomford: At Home in the Ministry

Some people always know, and there's nothing wrong with that. That's the case with Counselor Joel Thomford, who's had ministry on the mind from a young age. "When I was little, my grandfather was the church janitor, and I was often with him as he cleaned the church. As a boy, I would climb into the pulpit just for fun. He would always say, 'Someday you could preach from the pulpit!' And one day I did."

That's not to say that Pastor Thomford followed the classic path to the ministry. The son of dairy farmers, he attended public school from K-12 and considered becoming a large animal veterinarian. However, at the encouragement of his parents and church members, Counselor Thomford realized his true calling lay in the ministry.

After high school, Thomford enrolled at Northwestern College (WELS' former college for pastors). There he was in for a surprise. "The first time I sat down in chapel I heard 250 guys singing a hymn and I was astounded. I had never heard a sound like that before. I couldn't sing. I just listened for the whole hymn."

Counselor Thomford has now served as a parish pastor for 31 years and served on the Michigan Evangelism Commission for 12 years. During these years, he once ministered to a family whose teenaged son died unexpectedly. The family later referred to Pastor Thomford as "our rock." For him, this is the heart of ministry. He says, "I realized God had used me to bring them hope and comfort at a very dark time in their lives."

This year Counselor Thomford looks forward to meeting with students who don't know if MLC is where they belong. In his experience, "I felt like I had finally come home. Attending our Lutheran worker training college was one of the best things I ever did."

He will visit with you if you're a student at Fox Valley LHS, Illinois LHS, Michigan LHS, Huron Valley LHS, East Fork LHS, Luther High, Luther Prep, Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Winnebago LA, or Arizona LA.



*Pictured: Counselor Thomford (second from left) and his family, including his son Hans (middle), who serves as a tutor at MLC.*



## Happy Little Trees

Nothing beats stress quite like laughing with friends, eating cookies, and painting happy little trees, so it's no surprise that the chapel basement is packed whenever AIM (Art in Ministry) club hosts Bob Ross Night.

First-years **Karly Mathena** (LPS / Abiding Grace-Covington GA) and **Jenna Kassen** (Shoreland / Trinity-Caledonia WI) attended because they love to get creative and paint, but no skill is necessary. "We were laughing so hard because our paintings looked nothing like Bob's," says Karly.

"My friends and I all ended up with such unique and different paintings," Jenna says. "It was cool to see everyone's creativity and their end results, even though we were all following the same tutorial."

Regardless of whether or not you end up with trees, at Bob Ross Night you're sure to end up with great memories!

*Pictured: Jenna and Karly display their masterpieces.*