

IN FOCUS

MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE

SPRING 2024

In This Issue . . .

- Here on the Hill
- Early Ministry Experiences for First-Years
- MA in Theological Studies



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On the cover:

Isabel Monday (St. Peter-Appleton
WI) played a gorgeous Dolly in
MLC's musical. See more photos
from the show and the *Hello, Dolly!*
reunion inside!

Songs in the Night

By President Rich Gurgel

NWC '81, WLS '86



*I thought about the former days,
the years of long ago;
I remembered my songs in the night.
My heart meditated and my spirit asked:
"Will the Lord reject forever?
Will he never show his favor again?
Has his unfailing love vanished forever?
Has his promise failed for all time?
Has God forgotten to be merciful?
Has he in anger withheld his compassion?"*

Psalm 77:5-9

Have you been there?

In Psalm 77, Asaph cries out with a heavy heart as troubling questions rob him of sleep. What strikes him especially hard is that, while he once knew how to sing "songs in the night," those songs seem to be failing him now.

Such challenging "nights" aren't unique to Asaph. Living under the cross this side of heaven, we all know discouragement. When we examine our lives with the unvarnished honesty only Christ's forgiving grace can give us, we find ourselves even more discouraged. How far we—and all of God's world—have fallen from his created design!

But these times of night don't occur only for individuals. Right now, colleges and universities across the United States are experiencing more than a bit of a troubling night.

Three statistics confirm that reality. First, in 2019 there was a 25% oversupply of campus space in relation to student enrollment—and the pandemic made it worse. Second, over 500 colleges across the country have closed in the past 10 years, succumbing to declining enrollments and/or fiscal instability. Finally, the Great Recession of 2008 prompted a precipitous drop in our country's birth rate. Births in 2020 were 20% below 2007. Beginning in 2026, colleges will face a 15% decline in available high school graduates.

MLC is not immune to these challenges. A walk through our residence halls reveals that our enrollment is significantly under capacity. Not only has synodical membership declined steadily since 1991, but the number of infant baptisms in our synod in 2022 was less than half the number just 10 years earlier.

Unless God grants significant growth to our synod very soon, the pool of WELS members graduating from high school will decline significantly in the next decade.

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The mission of MLC is to train men and women to meet the public ministry needs of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.



Yet our gracious, saving God—not statistics—remains in control of his world and his Church. His saving right arm is still “not too short to save” (Isaiah 59:1).

The key for MLC, in the midst of the dark realities of higher education, is to continue to “sing songs in the night.” We sing because we don’t navigate this night alone. We sing because God freely gives us wisdom and strength in Jesus. We sing because he provides us the night-vision—dare we say “Knight-vision”—of the certain glory to come!

The rest of this issue of *InFocus* will hold before you many such “songs in the night.” These are good-news stories, highlighting God’s blessings on the faithfulness of our faculty and staff, the work ethic of our students, the support of our alumni, and the generosity of our donors.

As MLC continues *Pursuing Excellence Under the Cross*, God enables us to sing these “songs in the night” with confidence. In fact, a little later in Psalm 77, Asaph gives us the lyrics to sing:

Your ways, God, are holy.

What god is as great as our God?

You are the God who performs miracles;

you display your power among the peoples.

With your mighty arm you redeemed

your people,

the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

Psalm 77:13-15

Indeed, it is God’s work we are doing. According to his love and wisdom, he will bless it as he sees fit!



Holy Week Devotions—Our Gift to You

“The Savior We Need” is MLC’s newest devotion book created for you. It contains eight devotions written by MLC faculty, one for each day of Holy Week, Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, March 24-31, 2024.

The image of Jesus for these devotions was created by St. Croix Lutheran Academy senior Thi Anh Duong (Sunshine) Nguyen.

Two thousand years ago, God’s people were expecting the Messiah to be a conquering hero who would rescue them from their Roman oppressors. Instead, he came as a suffering servant who died at the hands of those Romans. This is what Paul called the foolishness of the cross.

But the Bible makes it clear that the Jesus those people received—the Jesus we are blessed to call our Savior today—is far greater than any we could ever have designed on our own. These eight devotions will show us he truly is the Savior we need.

You can access the devotions easily and conveniently in digital formats, beginning March 22. Simply scan the QR code here.

- Request that we send the eight devotions to your personal email on a daily basis, Palm Sunday to Easter. In the email, you’ll receive the written devotion and the link to an audio recording by the author.
- Read them in our online flipbook. Use the link within each devotion to listen to the author’s audio recording.



We pray that these devotions will comfort and strengthen you as you ponder the life and death of Jesus, who is truly the Savior we need.

The alumni photos at the bottom of the pages are from the anniversary classes of MLC, NWC, and DMLC: ’49, ’54, ’59, ’64, ’69, ’74, ’79, ’84, ’89, ’94, ’99, ’04, ’09, ’14, and ’19. Thanks to Copy Editor Heidi Schoof DMLC ’86, who provided this random selection of alumni.



Janice Stone
DMLC 1969
Costa Mesa CA



Ralph Scharf
NWC 1964
Watertown WI

Immersed in Ministry

We piloted an exciting new Early Ministry Experience (EME) program with some preseminary students last school year, and—wow!—did we see the benefits! So now it's become a regular feature of our preseminary program. In the first year of their eight-year journey to the pulpit, the students spend a few days immersed in congregational life. Of course, each EME is a little different, as each congregation has its own local color, and each pastor brings his own set of strengths to his call. Here's a little reflection from three students who completed their EME during the January term.

God's Grace at Grace-Amarillo TX

Isaiah Carlovsky, William Lambrecht, and Aaron Economy visited Amazing Grace-Amarillo, Texas. They sang and did the readings for the service, discussed ministry with Pastor Hans Thomford and Staff



Staff Minister Derek Gulrud MLC '22, Isaiah Carlovsky (St. Paul-New Ulm MN), William Lambrecht (Pilgrim-Menomonee Falls WI), Aaron Economy (Good Shepherd-West Allis WI), and Pastor Hans Thomford MLC '15, WLS '19

Minister Derek Gulrud, and then did some service projects, including staining wood in the church. Here's what Isaiah learned:

A church is a family: Ministry is more than pulpits and Bible studies. It's relationships with your members. What I noticed in this church is that they're very close. They're a family. Maybe because they're smaller, they check in on each other, help each other.

Different backgrounds keeps things interesting: In a mission church, a lot of the members won't be WELS born-and-raised. They may be people from different church bodies, or people who fell away, or people who are new converts. So this church did things to appeal to all of them. They used some contemporary music and taught a new song every month. But they still kept the traditional stuff too.

Words of wisdom from Pastor Thomford: Pastor Thomford kept emphasizing the idea that not all churches are like small-town Midwestern churches. The church is changing. And though lots of things don't change—and shouldn't change—we do have to look to the future. We do have to help the future church grow.

Other Texas highlights: We went to a Texan tea place. I'm imagining old ladies with tea cups, but it's actually vats of all kinds of tea. We bought three gallons. We went to a ranch and helped a member do some chores. We also went to the Big Texan and ate an 18-ounce steak.

Looking ahead to his ministry: I was already set, but this experience confirmed my decision. 'Wow, this is fun,' I thought. I think maybe I could handle this kind of mission work.

EARLY MINISTRY EXPERIENCE 1 In this required learning experience, first-year preseminary students immerse themselves in a congregation for several days, keep a reflection journal, and then debrief with the EME program coordinator, **Professor Aaron Dolan** MLC '03, WLS '07, back at MLC. "In every debrief," Dolan says, "our students comment on how well the pastors know God's Word and how well they interact with people. They see that ministry is communicating God's Word not only to groups, but also to individuals. They understand how important this is!"

PROGRAM GOALS

- **Motivational:** To encourage preseminary students through interaction with experienced and joyful pastors.
- **Cultural:** To expose students to ministry settings different from those they know.
- **Instructional:** To help equip our students with the skills and attitudes needed for pastoral ministry.



Timothy
Soukup
NWC 1984
Madison WI



Sydney
Cody
MLC 2019
Juneau WI



David
Huebner
NWC 1979
New Ulm MN



Pamela
Miller
DMLC 1989
West Salem WI

Rising Faith at Resurrection Verona, Wisconsin

Jacob Wotruba and Lucas Prange spent four days at Resurrection in Verona, Wisconsin. They helped put together a Bible study, studied Greek with Pastor Paul Schupmann for his sermon, attended a meeting and Bible class, and observed the rhythm and flow of the day for a pastor at a midsize church in Wisconsin. Here's what Jacob learned:



Pastor Paul Schupmann MLC '03, WLS '07, Lucas Prange (New Life-Kenosha WI), Jacob Wotruba (Mount Olive-Suamico WI), Joey Olson (Immanuel-Greenville WI), John Westendorf (Mount Calvary-Waukesha WI), and Pastor John Stelter MLC '05, WLS '09

Mutual encouragement: It was super encouraging to meet all the new people. They were so welcoming! And they were encouraged to know that we were studying to be pastors.

Other Wisconsin highlights: We were treated to lunch by the Vines and Branches Bible study group and to a Wisconsin Badger basketball game by a long-term member of Resurrection who had lots of historical stories to tell.

Looking ahead to his ministry: Coming into school here, I already had a great passion for ministry and sharing God's Word, and after this trip, I feel even more encouraged. It's just good to see how we can one day make a difference in people's lives by sharing the gospel.

Building on the Sure Foundation Brandon, South Dakota

Andy Raasch visited Sure Foundation, a 5-year-old mission startup in Brandon, South Dakota. He spent four days shadowing Pastor



Andy Raasch (Salem-Stillwater MN) and Pastor Craig Wilke MLC '15, WLS '19

Craig Wilke, sitting in on catechism classes, leadership meetings, a Building Committee meeting, and some Bible Basics courses. Here's what Andy learned:

Building fast: My favorite part of the entire trip was sitting in on the Building Committee's meeting. They're a young mission startup, and they're already making plans to build a multi-million-dollar church.

Ministry from an entrepreneur's view: Having an entrepreneurial background, I thought it was super cool to see the numbers behind everything. It was also awesome to see the visual models of what the church might look like. I hadn't thought of how entrepreneurial being a pastor was, but shadowing a pastor of a mission startup definitely revealed that. I got to witness Pastor Wilke do some accounting and collaborating as well as ultimately creating and presenting a proposal to the Building Committee.

Looking ahead to his ministry: My EME trip affirmed and fueled my desire to pursue pastoral ministry! It excited me for the possibility of getting called to serve at a mission startup church!

ADDITIONAL PRESEMINARY FIELD EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

- **Early Ministry Experience 2:** Complete a congregational assistance experience under the auspices of MLC's Daylight program.
- **Evening Chapel:** Prepare and preach an evening chapel devotion at MLC.
- **Sunday Morning Ride-Along (optional):** Accompany an MLC professor who fills a pulpit vacancy at a local congregation. Possibly assist at worship or Bible class.



Amy
Knurowski
MLC 1999
Princeton WI



Karl
Butzky
NWC 1969
Detroit



Margaret
Rosin
DMLC 1974
Oklahoma City



Robert
Mohr
DMLC 1964
Glendale AZ

Dive into Teaching

We understand that some of our students come to MLC with questions. “I think I want to be a teacher (or pastor or staff minister), but how can I be sure?” That’s one reason we’ve developed Early Field Experience 1 for first-year education and staff ministry majors—so they can plunge right into ministry and see if it feels like a good fit. The five-day event occurs immediately after students’ first semester here—in our new January term. We asked some first-year students how it went, and we thought you’d like to know too. After all, these future teachers could be serving your family and your congregation in a few short years!



Myah Loberger

(Mount Olive-Appleton WI)

EFE is . . . a little taste of what your future may look like. The first year in college you’re usually taking gen ed classes, so actually being able to be the one teaching instead of listening is so unique. I love that MLC gives us an experience to see if this is

really what we want our future to look like!

EFE showed me . . . just how much I want to be a teacher. It was so much fun interacting with the students and collaborating with other classmates to improve our lessons.



Sam Plocher

(Holy Trinity-Des Moines WA)

Lightbulb moments: I taught third graders about area and perimeter by having them lie on the ground and form shapes. Seeing the lightbulb turn on when they understood a problem is something I’ll always remember with joy.

My love for kids . . . only grew through this experience. I am so excited to be out in the ministry teaching kids just like these someday.



Hannah Bodden

(Abiding Word-Houston)

It all clicked: I put together a lesson on one of my favorite stories! I took concepts of characterization to help students relate texts back to themselves, and at the end of my lesson, when some of the students were telling each other about their favorite

character and why, it was so exciting to see how they had gotten something out of the lesson!

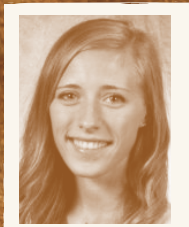
A little nervous, but . . . I was a little worried because I’m only six years older than the kids I was teaching, and I was a little afraid that they would be mean to me. But the kids were so sweet. I wished that I was able to teach more than just two groups, because I had so much fun having discussions about English with the kids!

FIELD EXPERIENCES FOR EDUCATION MAJORS

Our ministry training includes hands-on teaching every year of college!



Jason Rimmert
MLC 1999
Friesland WI



Madeline Scott
MLC 2014
Beaver Dam WI



Jonathan Favorite
MLC 2004
Eagle River WI



Abigail Gawel
MLC 2014
Midland MI

EARLY FIELD EXPERIENCE 1

(First-years in January term)

Mini-Presentations

- Lesson planning, assessment, inquiry
- Group work, hands-on teaching
- Classroom management
- Characteristics of early childhood, primary, intermediate, middle, and secondary students
- Divine call
- Urban ministry, special education
- Technology, music, coaching, drama

Teaching

- Lesson preparation
- Teaching with peers
- Teaching children from St. Paul's

Observation, reflection & journaling



Ella Bergemann

(Good Shepherd-Downers Grove IL)

Leveling up: The EFE 1 experience made me realize on a new level just how much I want to teach. Hearing called workers' stories of sharing the gospel (not only with kids but with their families as well), I became convinced that there's

nothing else I'd rather do with my life.

Thank you, presenters! The presenters were knowledgeable and welcoming, and I learned so much from their insights and stories. Hearing wisdom on various teaching-related topics was incredibly inspiring and rekindled my excitement to learn how to share the joys of teaching.

Teaching is a good fit: I learned a lot about how teaching fits my personal characteristics and gifts. Teaching fits me as an individual better than I ever thought. No teacher is the same, and that's awesome!



Isabelle Steidl

(St. Paul-Muskego WI)

What's that stuff called?

I taught first- and second-grade science, and we made oobleck, which is a suspension of cornstarch and water that can behave like a solid or a liquid depending on how much pressure you apply. My highlight was seeing the kids'

reactions to the experiment and their excitement to learn. They weren't afraid to ask questions and get their hands dirty.

This experience . . . really reinforced my passion and excitement for becoming a teacher. It also reinforced my reason for becoming a teacher, which is to teach little kids about Christ so they can not only be in heaven someday but also teach others about Christ.

Early Field Experience 1 (first-years)

- Intro to the teaching ministry
- 5 days on campus

Early Field Experience 2 (sophomores)

- Observation, participation, and teaching
- 5 days at a Lutheran school

Clinicals (juniors)

- 3 weeks at a Lutheran/public school during J-Term

Student Teaching 1 (seniors)

- 10 weeks at a Lutheran school

Student Teaching 2 (seniors)

- 6 weeks at a public school

* **Early childhood education majors student teach for 18 weeks at our MLC Early Childhood Learning Center**



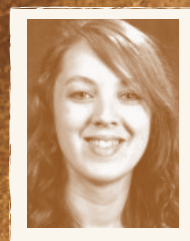
Joseph Flynn
DMLC 1959
St. Paul MN



Linda Armitage
DMLC 1974
Madison WI



Gene Gronholz
DMLC 1969
New Ulm MN



Rebekah Taves
MLC 2009
Marquette MI

Focus On *Admissions*



2023-2024 Student Ambassadors

They give tours, talk with prospective students at Focus on Ministry events, help in the Admissions Office, and shine their lights in a hundred ways as they represent MLC! We're proud of our Student Ambassadors and the work they do for the college and the church!

Front row: Hailey Rice (Rocky Mountain LHS / Living Hope-Commerce City CO), Hannah Bodden (Concordia LHS / Abiding Word-Houston), Kay Prigge (Nebraska LHS / Faith-Rising City NE), Michaela Larson (Rocky Mountain LHS / Shepherd of the Valley-Westminster CO), Kate Mensching (Luther Prep / St. Luke-Watertown WI), Ella Bergemann (Luther Prep / Good Shepherd-Downers Grove IL). **Middle row:** Natalie Luebke (Kettle Moraine LHS / Trinity-West Bend WI), Anna Treder (California LHS / Christ the Vine-Temecula CA), Myah Loberger (Fox Valley LHS / Mount Olive-Appleton WI), Karissa Holdcroft (Fox Valley LHS / St. Paul-Appleton WI), Isabelle Steidl (Wisconsin LHS / St. Paul-Muskego WI), Emma Grace Kramer (Minnesota Valley LHS / Immanuel-Gibbon MN), Sarah Vance (Luther Prep / St. Paul-New Ulm MN), Kassidy Aguilar (California LHS / Cross of Glory-Peoria AZ), Jason Hanania (Michigan Lutheran Seminary / Bethany-Saginaw MI). **Back row:** Jack Pittenger (Evergreen LHS / Bethany-Port Orchard WA), Ryan Boggs (Luther Prep / St. Luke-Watertown WI), Nathan Pausma (Winnebago LA / St. Luke-Oakfield WI), Sam Plocher (Evergreen LHS / Holy Trinity-Des Moines WA), Connor Heckendorf (Luther Prep / Light of the Valleys-Reno NV), Grant Gawrisch (St. Croix LA / New Life-Shoreview MN), Luke Latzke (Illinois LHS / Trinity-Crete IL), Corey Tipton (Wisconsin LHS / St. Lucas-Milwaukee). **Not pictured:** Jordyn Heckendorf (Kettle Moraine LHS / Shepherd of the Hills-West Bend WI).



Did You Know?

Our new director of financial aid, Jim Hanson, has good news to share with prospective students and their parents: The numbers are in, and we can report that for *five straight years*, our graduates borrowed less money to pay for their education at MLC. Over those five years, the average debt has decreased almost \$4,000! In addition, 1 out of 3 graduates in 2023 borrowed no money at all. They are leaving MLC debt-free.

Reducing student debt is one of the primary objectives in our strategic plan, ***Pursuing Excellence Under the Cross***. In fact, we have two very specific goals: *no loans* for first-year students and *low loans* for graduating students. We work on this every day!



**Steven
Degner**
NWC 1969
Ixonla WI



**Deborah
Hanel**
DMLC 1984
Prior Lake MN



**Jeffrey
Grundmeier**
MLC 2009
Houston



**Carol
Zwieg**
DMLC 1964
Watertown WI



Seminary Students Recruiting for MLC

They're ideally situated to recruit for the public ministry.

Seth Hackbarth and **Ezra Blumer** are MLC 2023 grads now at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. That puts them in close proximity to several Lutheran high schools—Kettle Moraine, Kingdom Prep, Lakeside, Luther Prep, Manitowoc, Shoreland, Winnebago, and WISCO—where they talk to students about becoming a pastor, teacher, or staff minister.

They lead chapel, give class presentations, have coffee with individual students, and attend youth nights, athletic contests, and major events like Choral Fest. The high school students are very much like themselves just a few years ago—thinking (and sometimes worrying) about colleges, careers, and callings. Ezra and Seth are there to answer questions and encourage them.

“God has blessed the people I meet with such a wide variety of backgrounds, interests, and gifts,” Seth says. “I’m so excited to see how God best uses all of them.”

Ezra adds that his encouragement to the high school students includes not just what they can do in the future, but how they can be a light to the people around them right now. “Ministry starts now,” he says, “so I encourage them to start now by using their passion for ministry to encourage their fellow classmates to consider ministry.”



In addition to recruiting high school students, Ezra Blumer and Seth Hackbarth also lead seminary tours and Q & A sessions for elementary school students. Here they're joined by Micah Otto MLC '19 as they tell students why they decided to become pastors.

The Blessing of CPGP

God has blessed our students immensely through the Congregational Partner Grant Program (CPGP).

Here's how it works: Congregations give grants for their members who attend MLC, and MLC matches the grants—up to \$1,325 in 2023-2024. This year we matched \$667,000 in congregational grants, which means we disbursed more than \$1.3 million to our students through CPGP.

And we are looking ahead to even bigger numbers. According to our strategic plan, *Pursuing Excellence Under the Cross*, we are boosting the “match max” by 10% every year. We'll match \$1,450 per student in 2024-25 and \$1,600 per student in 2025-26.

Over the course of four years, participating students can easily receive more than \$10,000 in assistance from this program alone.

Thank you, congregations, for your generosity!

And thank you, donors, for helping us match these grants! It's a challenge every year, but you are helping us do it!

Will You Be the Match?

Would you help us match the congregational grants?

The continuation of this program relies heavily on the generosity of our donors.

Whether you're an individual donor, or a congregation that wants to support the Congregational Partner Grant Program but doesn't have any members at MLC right now, we would welcome your gift!

You can be the match!

Give online at
mlc-wels.edu/donate.



Gregg Schoeneck
NWC 1974
Rhineland WI



Kim VanCalster
DMLC 1994
Green Bay WI



Dean Tesch
DMLC 1984
Appleton WI



Kathryn Bare
MLC 2004
Owosso MI

Diving Deep into the Word MLC's

A high school religion teacher, a college math professor, a family minister. Their ministries are different, but their desire to grow in the Word is the same. That's why Instructor Ben Carlovsky, Dr. Kristi Meyer, and Staff Minister Brandon Steenbock all pursued a Master of Arts in Theological Studies at Martin Luther College. What they found is that they *are* growing, just as they'd hoped, but the benefits are not for them alone. As the Word lives in them in new and deeper ways, they're sharing this with their fellow Christians every day. Let's see what they have to say.

Ben Carlovsky High School Religion Teacher

Ben Carlovsky MLC '03 was originally enrolled in MLC's Master of Science in Educational Administration program. As an elementary school principal at Abiding Word-Houston, that made sense. But when he accepted a call to teach religion at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, he switched programs midstream. Now he's a 2023 graduate of our Master of Arts in Theological Studies program, a program with deep content to match his deep passion.



Why he enrolled: I wanted to dig into the Bible and to learn more about the content that I'm teaching at Wisconsin Lutheran High School. I took classes ranging from New Testament Studies to Mission Trips, from Apologetics to Hermeneutics. I not only wanted to grow in my content knowledge, but also learn from the amazing teachers and my fellow students in the program. I enjoyed reading and learning from their perspectives.

What he found: The program exceeded my expectations. The wide variety of teachers and topics was much appreciated. And I enjoyed the structure of the classes, which allowed me to fit them into my schedule.

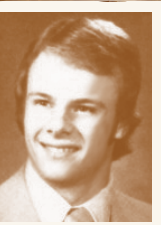
Some specific examples: I greatly enjoyed the perspectives gained in my Biblical Hermeneutics classes with Pastor Paul Wendland [retired Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary president and professor]. How to interpret the Bible is a skill that can be used across the classes that I teach. I also enjoyed how we could raise questions from our classrooms, and we were given biblical feedback and best practices. I also enjoyed Old Testament with Dr. Ken Cherney and Dr. John Boeder's

class on mission trips. Both were extremely applicable and timely.

Getting fed: This program was so heavy on the Bible, and the Bible works! It works on all of us. I personally read and reflected more often on the promises of God during the completion of this program.

Feeding others too: I am passionate about teaching students about God and his Word. As I took the classes, I found myself incorporating the conversations and topics into my teaching. I know that my students have benefited from my time in this program.

His encouragement: I would say that you should be ready to work, but the work pays off. Find a program that excites you, and continue to work and grow in that area.



Lawrence Olson
NWC 1979
Milwaukee



Ramona Sawall
DMLC 1984
Jakarta,
Indonesia



Daniel Westendorf
NWC 1959
Saginaw MI



Leslie Greaves
DMLC 1969
Milwaukee

Dr. Kristi Meyer College Math Professor

Why would a professor with her PhD in math go back to school and pursue another degree . . . a degree outside her field . . . a degree in *theology*? We wondered too.

So we talked to Dr. Kristi Meyer, a mathematics professor at Wisconsin Lutheran College. Dr. Meyer is a WLC graduate who earned her PhD in mathematics from Iowa State University, and then earned her master's degree in theological studies here at MLC. She says that she may teach math, but theology is her field. It's *all* our fields.



Why she enrolled: I've had an interest in theology for quite a while. I toyed with the idea of pursuing staff ministry certification through MLC, but that didn't feel like quite the right fit. When the MATS program first started in fall 2018, it was the right fit and gave me the opportunity to study both theoretical and practical theology and earn an advanced degree.

Her main goal: To continue learning about theology in a deeper way, a more focused and intentional way. Our ministerial education schools are blessed with amazing professors, and I was hoping to grow in my knowledge of God and his Word by sitting at their feet—an opportunity that likely would not have been possible for me without the MATS program.

The program fits into a busy schedule: The structure of the program is fantastic for called workers. The vast majority of the program has been asynchronous. This allows me to do my homework when it's convenient for me (which is often at 6:30 am). The professors are also really good about posting materials and assignments in advance. If I know I have a busy couple of days coming up, I can plan out when I'm going to do my homework and not have a deadline sneak up on me.

She discusses it with her college students: Interestingly, one of the biggest impacts has been on the

relationship with my WLC students. I don't talk about my MATS classes super often with my students—remember that I teach math—but I do occasionally bring it up. My students have been extremely supportive and interested in what I am studying, and this has led to conversations that allow me to witness in a new and unexpected way.

She's experienced a mindset shift: I tend to carry theological concepts with me all day long. When I have an assignment due or when I'm working on a paper, my topic is always there, even though I'm not actively writing. It's not always at the forefront of my brain, but it is always there in the background. And it's really neat to have theological ideas and concepts always there in the background.

Her encouragement to you: Start by taking just one class. Even if you're not sure that you want to pursue an advanced theological degree, you can still take one class. If you decide the program isn't for you, that's totally fine. But I'm guessing you will decide that the program is for you, and you'll want to continue taking more classes! One of my pastors is fond of a saying I also love: "Time spent in God's Word is never time wasted." And the MATS program most definitely has its participants spending time in God's Word. Yes, it's a commitment; yes, it's work. But it is incredibly beneficial in so many ways, and that's the thought I'd like to leave with people, especially potential MATS students.



**Emily
Gorzalski**
MLC 2009
Appleton WI



**Alan
Horn**
NWC 1984
Omaha NE



**Mildred
Horman**
DMLC 1964
West Salem WI



**Nathan
Bitter**
DMLC 1994
Oakfield WI

Brandon Steenbock

Congregational Staff Minister

He's the family minister at St. Mark-Green Bay WI, where he shares God's Word in interesting ways every day, including Bible studies, catechism class, pre-marriage and marriage enrichment classes, and the livestreamed "Pub Theology," where they drink beer and talk about God.

He also loves to study, so pursuing a master's in theology made sense. But for **Brandon Steenbock MLC '06**, studying theology isn't just a personal pursuit. It's something he does for the people he serves.



Why he enrolled: I find that I do ministry best when I'm learning, because it feeds me with new ideas and new ways of thinking. I'm naturally curious and creative, and learning charges up those gifts. After finishing the Master of Arts in Theological Studies program, I completed a Doctor of Ministry program. I want to be the best teacher of God's Word I can be. Even though I've finished formal education for now, I'm never going to stop reading and learning.

The synergy of teaching and learning: If I'm writing a Bible study or preparing a devotion, I'll incorporate things I've just been learning in my class. Or on the flipside, when I'm posting in the discussion boards for a class, I can incorporate things I've just been working on or conversations I've had in my ministry. These courses fill up my brain and my soul. When I'm not working with the Word for my ministry, I'm studying the Word for classes. Or I'm thinking about it while I'm doing other things. I'm constantly investing myself in it. That not only opens up new areas of curiosity and understanding, but also gives me new ideas about how to apply it. And I love passing on what I'm learning to other people.

His encouragement to you: The cool thing about pursuing an advanced theological degree is that it opens your eyes to all the things about Scripture you don't know. It raises all the questions you never knew you should be asking. It exposes you to the perspectives and debates theologians have asked across the centuries and all the different ways they tried to answer the really big questions. It gives you permission to question and assess the conclusions of long-dead theologians and realize that they were just people trying to understand God's Word, just like us. And best of all, it gives you a chance to grow closer to Jesus as you gain a deeper understanding of how his truth has been communicated through his church over the past 2,000 years.

Advanced degrees are important for the whole synod: For many years we've had to turn to other institutions and church bodies to get advanced education. That's getting better, but only because more of our people are getting the education needed. It's such a blessing that MLC provides more of this continuing education, but to preserve that blessing, we need people who take the time to pursue it. It's worth it—not just for ourselves, not just for our own ministries and churches, but for our synod and the church as a whole.

It's been an incredible privilege and a thrilling experience to teach a course on Christian apologetics to students pursuing their MATS degree. We have students who have lived some life out there in the world and who have served in a wide variety of contexts. They come with rich life experiences, and they bring a beautiful curiosity to our study. They produce work of such a quality that it's a pleasure to receive it and react to it. I always make a point of scheduling multiple conversations over Zoom in small groups so that the connections we make can be real and lasting. I had no idea how much I would enjoy them and the role I get to play.

– Dr. Mark Paustian, Faculty

Teaching Christ in the Old Testament was such a great experience. Watching seasoned Christians reread the Old Testament through the lens of Christ and finding new insights into Christ's love for sinners was truly rewarding. These insights will undoubtedly enhance their teaching and ministry.

– Dr. Michael Berg, Faculty

Master of Theological Studies Faculty

While it's natural for Lutheran teachers and staff ministers to want to gain practical skills and learn what's new in their professions, many just really want to dive more deeply into God's Word. The MATS program gives them the opportunity to do so at the feet of some of our church's most gifted theologians—from Martin Luther College, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Wisconsin Lutheran College, Bethany Lutheran College, and parish ministry.



Michael Berg
DMin, MDiv
Wisconsin Lutheran College



Lawrence Olson
DMin, STM, MDiv
Martin Luther College



Paul Steinberg
DMin, MDiv
*Chaplains in Schools, Inc. /
A City for God*



John Boeder
DMin, MS, MDiv
*Ascension Lutheran Church
Escondido CA*



Mark Paustian
PhD, MA, MDiv
Martin Luther College



William Tachmier
PhD, MDiv
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary



Kenneth Cherney, Jr.
PhD, MA, MDiv
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary



Joel Pless
PhD, STM, MDiv
Wisconsin Lutheran College



Paul Wendland
MDiv, MA
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary



Timothy Grundmeier
PhD, MA, MDiv
Martin Luther College



John Schuetze
DMin, MS, MDiv
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary



Keith Wessel
PhD, MDiv
Martin Luther College



Joshua Mears
PsyD, MA
*Wisconsin Lutheran Child
& Family Services*



Michael Smith
PhD, STM, MDiv
*Bethany Lutheran Church
Ames IA*

Master of Arts in Theological Studies

This program is for you if you are a teacher, staff minister, or lay leader (with some theological training) and now want to . . .

- Investigate the tools needed to interpret Scripture.
- Be better prepared for Bible class, catechism class, evangelism, or counseling.
- Explore what God says about some of today's complicated ethical questions.
- Gain wisdom to counsel the troubled in your church.
- Learn what church history teaches about the church today.
- Gain confidence in leading others to a deeper walk with Christ.
- Construct your own personal philosophy of ministry.

What I enjoy most about teaching online is engaging with interesting, interested, and committed scholars from all over the church. A teacher from Goodhue, Minnesota, can engage in discussion with someone serving in Austin, Texas. I am enriched by those conversations and strengthened in my faith as we grapple with God's Word together.

– Dr. Paul Wendland, Faculty

here on the

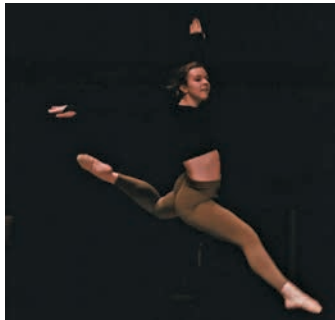
hill

Unto Us a Child Is Born

It was a melding of grace, beauty, and tradition as the choirs, Wind Symphony, and Hosanna Ringers rang in Christmas joy with excerpts from Handel's *Messiah*, as well as familiar carols and anthems.

Plocher Positioned for Nationals

As of mid-February, first-year high jumper **Sam Plocher** (*Holy Trinity-Des Moines WA*) notched 2.03 meters, a personal record, placing him in an eighth-place tie among all Division III jumpers in the country. The top 20 jumpers will move on to National Championships in Virginia in March.



No Snow? Snow What!

It was balmy on campus for Winter Carnival, but students still enjoyed broomball (pictured), as well as ice skating at the Civic Center, hockey with the guys from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, karaoke, badminton, speedball, the talent show (*two acts pictured*), and of course the traditional UMOG (Ugliest Man on Campus) contest.





Knights Stun Northwestern

The men's basketball team upset an undefeated Northwestern team 77-70 on December 8. It was the team's first defeat of the Eagles since 2008, when Head Coach **Greg Holzhuetter** MLC '10 was point guard on the team. **Thomas Balge** (St. Paul-New Ulm MN, pictured) contributed 19 points, five rebounds, and two blocks.



Best Season in Years for Knights

The Martin Luther College women's basketball team finished 12-13, the most victories since 2015-2016. A six-game winning streak highlighted the season, including a stunning upset over first-place Minnesota Morris.

Lauren Paulsen (St. Matthew-Oconomowoc WI) and **Lydia Feidt** (St. Paul-Appleton WI) had great seasons, and seniors **Jordyn Heckendorf** (Shepherd of the Hills-West Bend WI, pictured right) and **Emma Nelson** (St. John-Redwood Falls MN, pictured left) provided strong leadership for Head Coach **Dan Gawrisch** MLC '08. Heckendorf notched 964 points in her career, fifth in MLC history, and 260 assists, fourth in history. Emma Nelson finished with the sixth-most rebounds in MLC history with 526.



Human Library

Yes, that's the correct term for interviews like this one of **Chau Bang (Lily) Dang** (Vietnam). Lily was an "open book," answering questions about her life, her country, and her MLC education.

here on the

hill

Hello, Dolly!

Hundreds enjoyed Forum's musical in November. The cast was amazing, putting on their "Sunday Clothes" and reaching for "Elegance"—all "Before the Parade Passes By."

Pictured: Isabel Monday (St. Peter-Appleton WI) as Dolly; **Ethan Cloute** (St. Luke-Watertown WI) as Horace; **Anastasia Alexandrowicz** (Grace-Crivitz WI) as Ermengarde and **Noah Uhlenbrauck** (St. Peter-Appleton WI) as Ambrose.





Hundreds and Hundreds of Them!

By the time our 2023-24 school year closes, we'll have welcomed about 700 high schoolers—like these from Evergreen LHS—for Focus on Ministry visits! Each visitor is thinking hard about whether they'd like to become a WELS called worker—a journey that begins here at MLC!

What are they impressed by? "How welcoming the people were," one prospective Knight said, "and just how much you can see God through everyone. It just shows that it's a great environment!"



It's Why We're Here!

Evangelism Day captures the core of our mission—sharing the good news of Jesus with the world. Guest speakers spoke on Outreach to the Poor, Muslim Mission, Art & Music in Evangelism, Urban Ministry, Reaching Out to the Transgender, Compassion for Victims of Trauma, and much more. *Pictured: Pastor Doug Tomhave, Staff Minister Phil Bischoff, Dawn Schulz, Pastor Terry Schultz, and Pastor Tim Bourman.*

Focus On *Scholarships*

THE SILAS LAWRENCE GERLING SCHOLARSHIP



Stephen and Hannah Gerling at Stephen's MLC graduation in 2022

This scholarship honors the life—the heartbreakingly short life—of Silas Lawrence Gerling. He is a child of God and the son of Stephen Gerling and Hannah (Stellick) Gerling, which is where our story begins.

Stephen and Hannah first met in Taichung, Taiwan. Some years later they reconnected and were married. At the time, Steve was working in the restaurant business, and Hannah was teaching at Divine Savior Academy in Doral, Florida, filling a call she had accepted after graduating from Wisconsin Lutheran College.

God led the couple to make a life-changing decision: Stephen would go back to school, pursuing preseminary training as a second-career student at Martin Luther College. They moved to New Ulm in the summer of 2020. Stephen began working and attending class at MLC, and Hannah began teaching in Mankato. Their first child, Sofia, was born in February 2021.

In 2022, Steve and Hannah received the happy news that they were expecting a second child. But as the pregnancy progressed, doctors informed the couple that there were concerns. Due to congenital malformations, the child would probably not be able to sustain life after birth. The family prayed and prayed. God answered those prayers on October 27, 2022, when Silas Lawrence Gerling was born. The couple loved him, held him, and sang hymns to him for the four hours of his short life. Most importantly, they had time to tell him about his Savior and to baptize

him before God took him from this earth to be with himself for all eternity.

Hannah and Stephen were so thankful for the hours they had with Silas and the assurance of his eternal salvation received through baptism. They took strength from the promises of our Lord in Isaiah 25:8: “He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces . . . The LORD has spoken.” The day of Silas’ burial, Hannah wrote him a letter that ended with the words, “We didn’t lose you. You just went safely home before we did.”

In 2023, Silas’ great-grandparents, Norman and Betty Stellick (*pictured*), established the Silas Lawrence Gerling Scholarship in honor of little Silas and in gratitude to our Savior God, who took Silas home to be with himself and who promises eternal life to all who believe.

As other second-career men move their families to New Ulm to pursue preseminary training at MLC, as Silas’ father Stephen did, the entire family hopes this scholarship will provide both encouragement and financial support.

Scholarship recipients are primarily second-career students who are pursuing preseminary training at MLC and who demonstrate financial need. If no students qualify in a given year, the scholarship may be given to second-career teaching ministry students or traditional students in the preseminary program.



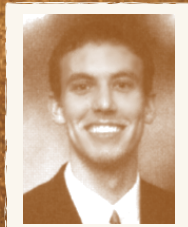
Silas's great-grandparents, Norman and Betty Stellick



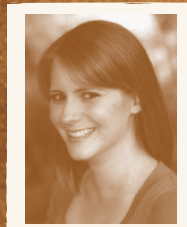
Robert Wassermann
NWC 1989
Maple Lake MN



Grace Wessel
DMLC 1989
New Ulm MN



Thomas Engelbrecht
MLC 2004
Yorkville IL



Katrina Ide
MLC 2009
Federal Way WA



When you establish a Legacy Scholarship, you can . . .

- Honor a loved one by naming the scholarship after them
- Support a specific area of ministry training that's important to you
- Specify whether the scholarship supports students based on their merit or their need
- Know that you are making a significant difference in students' lives
- Receive a personal thank-you letter from a scholarship recipient
- Receive special tax benefits
- Leave a lasting legacy at MLC
- Glorify the Lord of the Church!

You choose the size and scope of your scholarship.

FOR EXAMPLE . . .

- An annual gift of **\$1,000** could be awarded as one or two smaller scholarships per year.
- An annual gift of **\$10,000** could be awarded as several scholarships every year.
- An endowed scholarship of **\$25,000** would allow us to award 4% annually in scholarships.

We'll help you set it up.

Mark Maurice, VP for Mission Advancement
mauricme@mlc-wels.edu • 507.354.8221 x386

Beth Scharf, Resource Development Counselor
scharfbm@mlc-wels.edu • 507.354.8221 x241

Sarah Gieseke, Resource Development Counselor
gieseksm@mlc-wels.edu • 507.354.8221 x401

WELS Ministry of Christian Giving
mcg@wels.net • 800.827.5482

If You Invite Us, We'll Say Yes!

Could we visit your congregation for an MLC Sunday? Could we present to your OWLS group, LWMS, or other organization?



Our professors are ready to preach, lead Bible class, and give presentations on what's new at Martin Luther College. Please contact Christy at freycm@mlc-wels.edu to request a visit from us!

We're also grateful to the congregations that have recently hosted MLC Sundays: Shepherd of the Valley-Surprise AZ, Water of Life-Las Vegas, Christ-Saginaw MI, Good Shepherd-Fond du Lac WI, Shepherd of the Hills-La Mesa CA, St. Andrew-St. Paul Park MN, Living Word-Johnson City TN, Pilgrim-Menomonee Falls WI, and Christ-Zumbrota MN. We loved speaking with you!

Pictured: Professor Dave Scharf MLC '00, WLS '05 with Pastor Aaron Boehm MLC '00, WLS '04 at Shepherd of the Hills-La Mesa CA

Inspired Ways You Can Give to MLC in Spring 2024

Individual Retirement Account (IRA): Are you 70.5 years old or better? Are you required to take a distribution from your IRA? If you answered 'yes' to either of these questions, then you can receive a wonderful tax benefit by making a charitable gift *directly* from your IRA to Martin Luther College!

Did your IRA increase in value in 2023? None of us knows what the financial markets will do the rest of the year. *Perhaps now is a good time to make a tax-wise charitable gift to MLC!*

Appreciated stock or mutual fund shares: With 2023 such a plentiful year in the stock market, generous tax savings can be yours by donating securities that have appreciated in value. Why wait until the end of the year? Please call MLC now to learn how we can make this an easy way to give!

Interested in learning more about either of these options? We can help! Please contact us!

Mark Maurice, Beth Scharf, or Sarah Gieseke at MLC
507.354.8221 | mauricme@mlc-wels.edu
scharfbm@mlc-wels.edu | gieseksm@mlc-wels.edu

WELS Ministry of Christian Giving
800.827.5482 | mcg@wels.net

WELS Foundation, a partner of MLC
800.752.8940 | WELSFoundation@wels.net



James
Wade
DMLC 1979
Watertown WI



Molly
Ring
DMLC 1979
New Ulm MN



Brian
Goens
NWC 1989
Clear Lake SD



Taylor
James
MLC 2019
Escondido CA

Focus On *Scholarships*

OLSEN SCHOLARSHIP AT MLC RECEIVES SPECIAL GIFT



When St. Mark Lutheran Church in Brown Deer, Wisconsin, recently closed its doors, the members opened their hearts to Martin Luther College students.

Upon closing, the congregation distributed their assets among a handful of WELS ministries and schools, including a special gift to the

Ted Olsen Early Childhood Education Scholarship Fund at MLC.

Rev. Ted Olsen (*pictured*) was the first pastor at St. Mark, serving there from 1966 to 1971. More than 30 years later, he became the first president of Martin Luther College, serving from 1995 to his retirement in 2007.

The Olsen Scholarship was established by his family after President Olsen received his crown of glory in 2015. It awards grants of \$1,000 each to early childhood education majors who demonstrate financial need.

Early childhood education was a ministry dear to Ted's heart, and he was instrumental in planning the Early Childhood Learning Center (ECLC) at MLC. Since it opened in 2013, our professors, teachers, and caregivers have nurtured hundreds of infants and small children and—importantly—told them about their Savior Jesus.

The ECLC has also served as a kind of lab school, where MLC students have prepared to become early childhood teachers and directors, learning research-based best practices that they take with them into the 360+ preschools and centers in the WELS. These frontline ministries outnumber Lutheran elementary schools in the WELS by a wide margin (362 to 284), and it's here that many children and their families hear the gospel for the very first time.

As of 2023, the Ted Olsen Early Childhood Education Scholarship has been awarded to more than 25 early childhood majors. With this generous gift from St. Mark-Brown Deer, even more students will receive grants each year.

"We're so grateful to the members of St. Mark's for their generosity," said MLC President Rich Gurgel. "Their gift honors President Olsen's legacy and assists future servants of the gospel as they prepare for ministry at MLC."



You Can Give to Any Scholarship Fund!

You can donate to the Ted Olsen Early Childhood Education Scholarship Fund, the Silas Lawrence Gerling Scholarship (*page 18*), or any other named scholarship at MLC. Here's how:

Go to mlc-wels.edu/scholarships >
Click on the yellow **DONATE** button >
Open the "Designation" drop-down menu >
Choose the scholarship you'd like to donate to.



Matthew Natsis
MLC 2004
Saline MI



Jessica Falck
MLC 2004
Grand Rapids MN



Richard Shimek
NWC 1959
Echo MN



Erin Feddersen
MLC 2019
Great Mills MD

Thank You!

You Saw the Need. You Gave the Gift. You're Making a Difference!

CHAPEL OF THE CHRIST LOWER LEVEL

When we explained that we needed more music rehearsal and recital space, you understood that need. You understood that music is a special gift of God for his church, and that an MLC student *today* may very well be your music teacher, choir or band director, worship leader, organist, or pianist *tomorrow*.

When we suggested that we already have the square footage available in the lower level of Chapel of the Christ, and that we just needed to renovate it, you responded! *We thank all of you for your gifts—with a special shout-out to New Life Lutheran Church in Shoreview MN for their extremely generous gift.*



Update: We've begun construction of Phase 1—the infrastructure—thanks to you, your prayers, and your gifts!



COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION

As friends of MLC and partners with us in sharing the gospel, you know about the shortage of teachers and pastors in our synod. When we presented to you a new way to prepare second-career teachers, you immediately responded! You understood how this could be part of a solution, and you opened your hearts and gave! *Thank you!*

Now an update: Dr. Nichole LaGrow, program director, and Dr. Marty LaGrow, instructional designer, have clearly established the classes for two courses of study that leverage online competency-based education (CBE): a theological minor (which all MLC graduates have) and an elementary education degree.

They are seeking approval from the necessary state and regional review boards. In crafting the application materials, the campus has clarified how to teach these CBE courses to ensure that all graduates from MLC are held to the same caliber of excellence.

The CBE paradigm provides an alternative pathway to ministry for those who are unable to move to New Ulm for a traditional on-campus program. It allows WELS members to finish their college degrees while staying in their own home, community, church, and school contexts, which may include jobs at WELS schools.

Update: We are on track for enrolling our first CBE students in 2024—thanks to you, your prayers, your gifts!

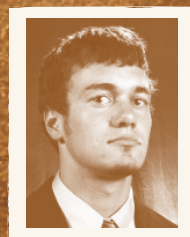
Still want to donate? Go to mlc-wels.edu/donate.



**Mark
Grubbs**
NWC 1974
Evansville IN



**Jesse
Rider**
MLC 2019
Gibbon MN



**Lucas
Bitter**
MLC 2009
Rochester MN



**Amy
Werner**
MLC 1999
Belle Plaine MN

A large, multi-story brick building with a prominent central tower and a cross on top. The building is surrounded by lush green trees and a clear blue sky.

Summit Hall

MLC Residence Halls: A New Direction

Times were different in 2019. When we began our capital campaign Equipping Christian Witnesses in 2019, we had a student enrollment of 750. Our prayer—and a goal of that campaign—was to raise enrollment to 900, which would have necessitated a new residence hall.

But God did not allow that kind of growth. The pandemic hit us in difficult and complicated ways, one of which was that many MLC-bound students decided they'd rather attend college closer to home.

Our enrollment stands today under 600. Residential space is no longer a concern. We are confident our enrollment will rise again, but for the foreseeable future, wise stewardship principles would dictate that we not begin new construction just yet.

Instead, we will invest in our current dormitories, updating and refreshing as needed. Our first projects will be restrooms and showers—first in Centennial Hall and then in Summit Hall.

Update: We are excited to begin renovations on the Centennial Hall restrooms and showers in summer 2024.

A brick building with a central tower, surrounded by trees and a paved area. Two people are sitting at a picnic table in the foreground.

Centennial Hall

SOLA: Special Appreciation for Special Donors

In November, we welcomed 53 guests to our Support & Outreach Legacy Association (SOLA) dinner. We're deeply grateful to these special donors who have established legacy gifts for MLC and who continuously support us with their prayers and encouragement. We treated them to a delicious dinner, presentations by President **Rich Gurgel** and Dean of Chapel **Jacob Behnken**, and complimentary tickets to *Hello, Dolly!*

If you'd like to make an estate gift and join SOLA, please call or email **Beth Scharf** at scharfbm@mlc-wels.edu / 507.354.8221.



The Shepherd Society

Nominate a called worker who has made a difference!

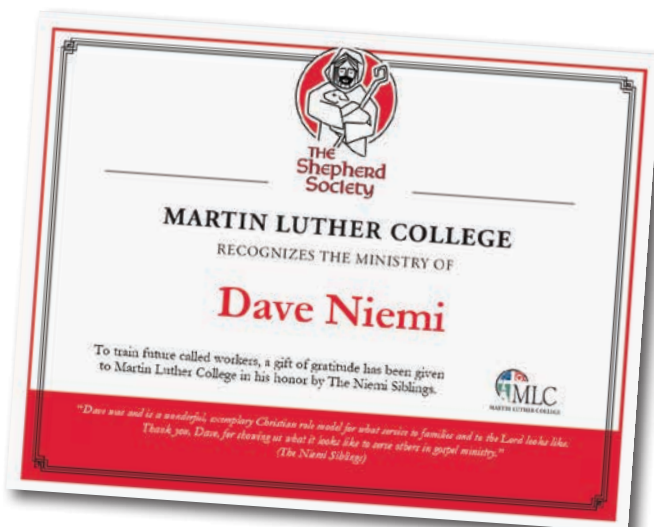
Founded in 2008, the Shepherd Society is comprised of called workers who've been recognized for making a difference in people's lives through their ministries.

Anyone may nominate a pastor, teacher, or staff minister for the Shepherd Society by filling out an easy form and sending it to Martin Luther College along with a gift of gratitude (\$250 minimum).

In so doing, the donors support the training of future called workers at MLC. At the same time, they express their gratitude to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, and to the specific called worker who has shepherded them in a special way.

The called workers nominated for the Shepherd Society receive a commemorative plaque and a personal letter from the MLC president.

To see the full list of Shepherd Society members—or to nominate a pastor, teacher, or staff minister for the Shepherd Society—go to mlc-wels.edu/go/shepherd-society.



Now Accepting Thalassa Submissions

Martin Luther College has now begun accepting submissions for the 18th annual **Thalassa Prize**. This \$1,000 prize is awarded to the best photo-and-essay submission from an MLC student or graduate who has served in an international ministry.

DEADLINE:
April 30, 2024

**SUBMISSION
GUIDELINES:**
mlc-wels.edu/Thalassa

ALL PAST WINNERS:
mlc-wels.edu/Thalassa



From MLCAA President

Phil Hunter MLC '11

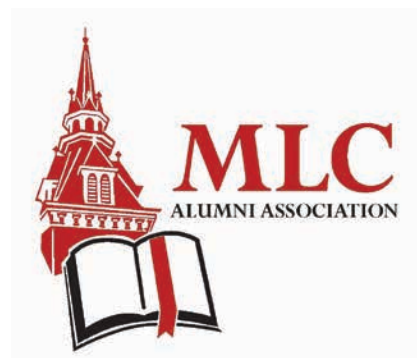
Seven years ago, I got a phone call from Professor Jon Schaefer inviting me to join the MLC Alumni Association. He said, "Someone nominated you. They must think you have a heart for your college and want to stay connected to it." He was right!

Many MLC alumni haven't returned to campus in years, but I encourage you to make the effort! I've been privileged to return to New Ulm each year (except during COVID) for our annual Alumni Association meeting. It's been fun to talk to professors, see campus improvements, and meet students who have received MLCAA's endowed scholarships.

As president of the MLCAA, I'm excited to welcome Michelle Markgraf as our director of Alumni Relations. We are blessed

to have her using her high-caliber talent on behalf of MLC alumni across the country and globe. The Alumni Association will coordinate our work (especially scholarships and campus projects) with Michelle to ensure we align with MLC's mission.

Finally, whether you're graduating from MLC at the end of this school year, or you graduated from one of our predecessor schools, treasure your label: "MLC alum." Let us help you get more connected to your alma mater this year!



Alumni Commencement Dinner

FRIDAY, MAY 17 | NEW ULM TURNER HALL

All alumni and emeriti of MLC, NWC, DMLC, MLA, and DMLHS (and their guests) are invited to join us for a brat and hamburger supper. The meal is free, but you will need to register to attend.

Turner Hall, lower level (102 S. State Street, New Ulm)

4:00 pm: Social hour

5:00 pm: Meal

7:30 pm: Commencement concert at MLC.

(Seats will be reserved for you at the concert.)

Meet old friends, share memories, and make new connections.

Registration is required because seating is limited. Three easy ways to register:



Online: Scan QR code

Email: alumni@mlc-wels.edu

Phone: Michelle Markgraf 507.354.8221 x387

Introducing **Michelle Markgraf** MLC's New Director of Alumni Relations



Please join us in welcoming **Michelle Markgraf DMLC '90** as the director of Alumni Relations. Michelle is a DMLC graduate who served at St. Paul-Fort Atkinson WI, Peace-Holiday FL, Christ the Lord-Clearwater FL, and Good Shepherd-Sioux Falls SD.

In 2017 she completed her MBA, which led her to employment as the operations manager and executive director of a variety of businesses. She has served as a director for Kingdom Workers and most recently has been running her own consulting firm. She is a passionate and driven volunteer, generously giving her time to many non-profits.

"One of my favorite passages is Ephesians 2:10," Michelle says. "We are all God's handiwork, and he prepares good works for us! I look forward to meeting with many of our great alumni and finding what good works God prepared for them. Although we come from many parent schools, all the alumni work together in support of MLC. I am grateful to have this opportunity to work with God's people!"

Friends for Life!

When we say you make friends for life at this campus, we aren't kidding! Take a look at this story submitted by **Marion Brandt Schenk DMLC '54**:

*It was graduation time 1951 at Dr. Martin Luther High School when seven girls in the graduating class living in Hillcrest Hall (present site of the MLC library) decided to start a round robin letter. They were **Elaine Albrecht, Thelma Birkholz, Carmen Bode, Marion Brandt, Lois Buerkle, Bethel Kahrs, and Myrna Zander.***

After graduation their lives went in different directions. Throughout the years, their letters encouraged and comforted each other in life's joys and sorrows. Now, 73 years later, four of those former classmates, all in their 90s, are still living. To this day, three of them continue their round robin letter writing: Marion Brandt Schenk, Lois Buerkle Bode, and Bethel Kahrs Matthies. How blessed they are!



Do You Remember?

We found this 1960s-era photo of students in the cafeteria.

Where was the cafeteria located? What meal do you remember the most from this cafeteria? Please send your answers to Michelle Markgraf at markgrml@mls-wels.edu.

Thank you!



From the Fall 2023 issue:

Thanks to our alumni with great memories! This photo shows the 1966-1967 Dr. Martin Luther College Choir recording a song for the Lutheran Chapel Service under the direction of **Prof. Meilahn Zahn DMLC '32**. The preacher (front left) is **Prof. Roland Hoenecke NWC '28**. Special thank you to **Marlis (Wrobel) Kremer DMLC '68, Lois (Sievert) Bode DMLC '67, Professor Emeritus Dr. John Nolte DMLC '68, and Lois (Festerling) Tackebury DMLC '67.**

Hello, Dolly . . . and Dolly . . . and Dolly!

MLC's musical weekend had an extra touch of "Elegance" this year. We welcomed 26 cast members and staff from the 1970 and 1995 productions of *Hello, Dolly!* as they reunited on campus to see this year's production. They shared memories, took photos, toured campus, enjoyed a complimentary buffet dinner, and had great seats for the show.

Karen Hasley DMLC '71 played Dolly more than 50 years ago, but she remembers the show very well. "My favorite memory is dear **Prof. Glenn Barnes** DMLC '60 saying to me as an aside—and as if he was delighted that he'd gone way over his budget: "My wife and I loved that production so much, we went to all four shows!"



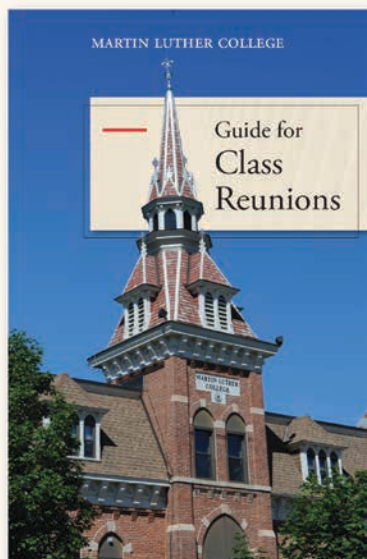
Karen Hasley - Dolly 1970
Isabel Monday - Dolly 2023
Anne (Schneider) Adickes - Dolly 1995



Gary Pufahl - Chorus 1995
Earl Heidtke - Chorus 1970



Diane (Kalbus) Kratz - Ermengarde 1970
Ana Alexandrowicz - Ermengarde 2023



2024 Reunion Dates

June 2: DMLC Class that started in Fall 1958 (Kiel WI)

Sept. 4-5: DMLC Class of 1966 (La Crosse WI)

Sept. 20-21: DMLHS Class of 1964 (New Ulm)

Sept. 20-21: MLA Class of 1974 (New Ulm)

Sept. 24-25: DMLHS Class of 1959 (New Ulm)

Sept. 27-29: DMLC Class of 1974 (New Ulm)

Planning a Reunion?

Whether you need a list of classmates or assistance in arranging a campus tour, our Alumni Relations Office is here to help! Use our online guide at mlc-wels.edu/alumni/reunions. Or connect with us at 507.354.8221 x387 or alumni@mlc-wels.edu.



Aaron Hamilton
NWC 1994
Decatur MI




Rachel Horneber
MLC 2004
Pittsford NY



Philip Kuckhahn
NWC 1954
Watertown WI






Jessica Neumann
DMLC 1994
Melstone MT



1884-2024
Celebrating
140 Years

ALUMNI —

Share your memories of Old Main!

Old Main Turns 140!

Built in 1884 for \$16,500, Recitation Hall (now Old Main) has been part of MLC's culture for 140 years. In its first years, it served as an all-in-one facility to serve all the needs of the new school. The basement had a kitchen, washroom, and housekeeper's room. The first floor housed a professor's apartment, chapel, and two classrooms. The second floor had four classrooms, and the third floor held four large bedrooms.

Today, Old Main has its place in the National Register of Historic Places and remains an inspiring image on the bluffs of New Ulm. It houses MLC's print services department, several education divisions, and classrooms.

In celebration of 140 years, we invite you to share your memories of Old Main with us. Scan the QR code or email your memory to Michelle Markgraf, director of Alumni Relations, at alumni@mlc-wels.edu.



mlcday.com



MLC Day is May 1!

On this special day, we encourage friends of MLC across the globe to support the training of called workers by praying, sharing, and giving.

You'll also find downloadable *Project Elijah* recruitment materials for teachers to use in their classrooms that whole week.

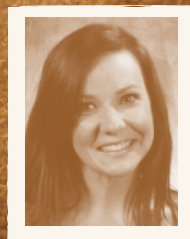
We're so thankful for your support, and we can't wait to celebrate MLC Day 2024!



Kent Reeder
MLC 2009
Menomonie WI



Eun-woo Kim
MLC 2014
Seoul, South Korea



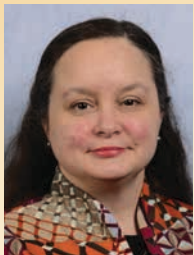
Bailey Fenske
MLC 2014
Round Rock TX



Vaughn Vogel
NWC 1964
Newton WI

FACULTY & STAFF NOTES

MLC Faculty & Staff Serve as Peer Reviewers



Dr. Nichole LaGrow

Dr. Nichole LaGrow (director, Nontraditional Education) and **Dr. John Meyer** DMLC '87 (director, Graduate Studies and Continuing Education) are helping other colleges and universities achieve and retain accreditation. They serve on the Peer Review Corps of the Higher Learning Commission, which is the official accrediting agency for 19 states.



Dr. John Meyer

As members of an HLC review team, they visit campuses and review documentation to assess college effectiveness, including the institution's mission, ethics, quality of teaching, assessment of learning, resources, planning, and more.



Carla Hulke

Carla Hulke (finance director) has also served on the HLC Peer Review Corps, and **Professor Emeritus Dr. David Wendler** served on the Higher Learning Commission for more than 20 years.



Professor Emeritus
Dr. David Wendler

Professor Peter Baganz DMLC '87 (history/social science) was appointed to the Heritage Preservation Commission for the city of New Ulm.

Dr. Richard Bakken (adjunct, Graduate Studies) started a new role as chief information officer for the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.



Professor Emeritus David Bauer DMLC '78 saw publication of a piano prelude on "10,000 Reasons" in *Sing God's Praises* (Northwestern Publishing House, 2023). Two MLC graduates are also published in this volume: **Brian Hildebrandt** MLC '14 and **Raquel (Freese) Willick** MLC '21.

Professor Jacob Behnken MLC '08, WLS '12 (dean of chapel) taught a Bible class series on Lutheran worship at St. Paul-New Ulm MN in December.

Professor Rebecca Cox DMLC '89 (physical education) partnered with the senior women's administrator and softball coach at the University of Minnesota-Morris to present "Being a Mom and a Coach" to women coaches in the Upper Midwest Athletic Conference in October.

Professor James Danell NWC '86, WLS '90 (academic dean, Preseminary Studies) taught The Life and Theology of Adolf Höncke at the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Winterim in January.

Professor Paul Grubbs MLC '01 (English) presented two workshops to the New Ulm Public High School faculty this school year: "Reading Strategies Across the Content Areas" and "Vocabulary Strategies Across the Content Areas." Along with **Professor James Carlovsky** MLC '02, '10 (education, math), he presented the keynote address at the Metro Milwaukee Teachers' Conference in February: "Developing Dispositions for Lifelong Learning: Cultivating Curiosity, Resilience, and a Growth Mindset." Grubbs also presented two grade-level sectionals at the Milwaukee Metro conference: "Make Your Classroom Conversations Crucial: Dispositions that Enrich Discussion."



James
Sievert
DMLC 1974
Fort Atkinson
WI



Katharine
Daubert
DMLC 1959
Oshkosh WI



Timothy
Spiegelberg
MLC 1999
Grand
Junction CO



Hayden
Miller
MLC 2019
Essexville MI

Professor Grace Hennig DMLC '89 (music) saw publication of her article "Pentecost Psalms" in the February 2024 issue of *In Tempo*, published by the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians (ALCM). She also published a review of the 49th Vi Messerli Memorial Lectures in Church Music at Concordia University Chicago in the spring 2024 issue of *CrossAccent*, also published by ALCM.

Professor Paul Koelpin NWC '85, WLS '90 (history) presented "The Relevance of Lutheranism in the 21st Century" in several sessions at the joint Manitowoc and Fox River Valley Pastors' Conference in Elkhart Lake WI in January. Koelpin is also a member of the planning committee for the 175th anniversary of WELS, which will occur in 2025.



Linda Kramer (director, Library Services) presented "The Best of Both Worlds: Using Aspen Discovery in an Academic Library Within a Public Library Consortium" at AspenCon in Golden CO in March. She also joined **Dr. Nichole LaGrow** (director, Nontraditional Education) to present "Starting at the Beginning: Building a New Program with OER" at the online Wisconsin Open Education Symposium in October.

Dr. Nichole LaGrow (director, Nontraditional Education) serves as editor of the New York College Learning Skills Association's scholarly journal, *Forum for International Research on Students and Teaching*. She also served on the planning committee for the Midwestern Higher Education Compact Technology Communities Conference, which took place in Chicago in February.

Michelle Markgraf DMLC '90 (director, Alumni Relations) offered the workshop "Dating Abuse: Identification and Helping a Friend" to MLC students in February.

Dr. Robert Martens MLC '09 (director, Information Technology) wrote an article on personal Bible study for the "Free in Christ" series of *Forward in Christ* (February 2024 issue). He also presented "Meeting Burnout by Leveraging Leadership" at the BrainStorm conference in Wisconsin Dells WI in March.

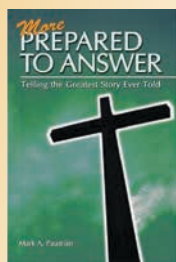
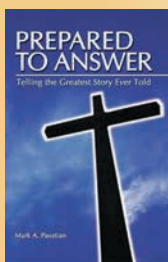


Dr. Kari Muente MLC '99 (social sciences) presented "Building a Stronger Inquiry-Based Inclusive Social Studies Classroom Through Universal Design for Learning (UDL)" at both the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) national convention in Nashville in December and at the Wisconsin Council for the Social Studies (WCSS) annual conference in Madison in March.



20 Years of Telling the Greatest Story Ever Told

Dr. Mark Paustian's books *Prepared to Answer* and *More Prepared to Answer* (Northwestern Publishing House, 2004) have been helping people share the gospel across the globe for 20 years. They've been translated into many different languages, including Russian, German, Spanish, and Latvian.



John Jordan
MLC 2019
Sahiwal,
Punjab,
Pakistan



Kollin Adickes
MLC 1999
Chino Hills CA



Mark Blauert
DMLC 1989
Greenfield WI



Peter Plagenz
MLC 2014
Manchester WI

FACULTY & STAFF NOTES

Professor Thomas Nass NWC '77, WLS '82 (Hebrew) attended the WELS, ELS, and LCMS leadership meeting in Jacksonville FL in December and served as the informal secretary. He also presented three essays on the book of Joel at the Red Wing Pastoral Conference in Hokah MN in January.

Dr. Mark Paustian NWC '84, WLS '88 (English, Hebrew) guested on Mark Kjenstad's *Impact* Podcast in February on the book of Ruth. His own podcast on communication and theology, *Where Two or Three*, most recently focused on apologetics, Christian vocation, and worship.

Dr. Joel Pless WLS '86 (adjunct, Graduate Studies) saw publication of a double book review in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* (Winter 2024). The topic of the books is the 1974 protest walkout from Concordia Seminary-St. Louis and the subsequent formation of Seminex (Concordia Seminary in Exile). Pless also spoke about his own memories of Seminex on the podcast *Let the Bird Fly* on February 19, 2024, the 50th anniversary of the St. Louis walkout.



Dr. Jon Roux DMLC '94 (education) presented "The Joys and Benefits of Read-Alouds" to the Parent Teacher League of St. John-Lewiston MN in February. He presented "So Now What? Reading in the Middle and Upper Grades" at the Western Wisconsin Lutheran Teachers' Conference at St. Matthew-Oconomowoc WI in February. He also presented "Enliven Your Social Studies Instruction with Children's Literature" at the Lake Lutheran Teachers' Conference at St. John-Burlington WI in February.

Professor David Scharf MLC '00, WLS '05 (theology) presented the keynote address "Tough Doctrines, Amazing Love" and the workshop "Just You and Jesus" at the GROW conference in Houston in February. This winter he preached for MLC Sundays at Water of Life-Las Vegas, Good Shepherd-Fond du Lac WI, Shepherd of the Hills-La Mesa CA, and Pilgrim-Menomonee Falls WI. He continues to serve as the "Q & A" monthly columnist for *Forward in Christ* magazine and as a devotion writer for "Grace Moments" (Time of Grace Ministries-Milwaukee).

Tutor Nathan Savage MLC '18, WLS '22 (theology) taught a Bible study series on Romans 8, "God's Grace Is for Me," at St. Paul-New Ulm MN this winter.



Aaron Spike MLC '02 (senior programmer) earned his master's degree in computer science from Georgia Institute of Technology in December.

Rev. Joel Thomford NWC '84, WLS '88 (admissions counselor) preached for MLC Sundays at Shepherd of the Valley-Surprise AZ, Christ-Saginaw MI, St. Andrew-St. Paul Park MN, Living Word-Johnson City TN, and Christ-Zumbrota MN.

Instructor Julianne Trebellhorn (adjunct, piano) serves as mayor of Winthrop, Minnesota.

Professor Alan Uher DMLC '87 (education) presented the sectional "Using *Christian Worship 21* as a Resource for Personal Devotions" to the Western Wisconsin District Teachers' Conference at St. Matthew-Oconomowoc WI in February. He also presented the keynote address "There's a Bible Story for That: Intentionalizing God's Word in Every Subject" and the sectional "Hands-On, Feet-On Geography Ideas" to the Lake Lutheran Teachers' Conference at St. John-Burlington WI in February.

Instructor Elisabeth Urtel (adjunct, fine arts) saw publication of "The Lutheran Hymnal (1941): The Synodical Conference's Ultimate Answer to the Language Question" in the Epiphany 2024 issue of *LOGIA: A Journal of Lutheran Theology*.



Professor Duane Vance MLC '16 (education) leads accreditation teams for WELSSA (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation). WELSSA provides WELS schools with encouragement and critical feedback on a comprehensive list of standards. Vance most recently led a WELSSA accreditation team at Wisconsin Lutheran High School in March.



Kenneth Rodrigue
MLC 2014
Clifton Park NY



Mary Frohmader
DMLC 1979
Sault Ste. Marie MI



Ryan Rathje
MLC 1999
Port Huron MI



Timothy Glende
NWC 1994
Columbus OH



**"I am the resurrection
and the life."**

"Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life"

The digital drawing on this card was created by Faith Yang, a ninth grader at St. Croix Lutheran Academy in West St. Paul, Minnesota. Faith wanted to capture many different aspects of Jesus' life and work of redemption. She chose eight triangles, the triangle representing the Holy Trinity and the number 8 representing both the eight days of Holy Week and also the "eighth day," an ancient metaphor for everlasting life.

Clockwise, beginning in the top right corner, Faith writes:

- Jesus wearing the golden crown and the hands connected in friendship tell us that he will always and forever be our King and friend.
- Jesus defeated the devil for us and helps us fight temptation.
- We can always talk to God in prayer. He invites us into a deeper and stronger relationship with him.
- We were all born spiritually blind, but Jesus heals our blindness and gives true sight so we can see his holiness and know his forgiveness.
- Jesus is omnipresent. He will always be there for us—especially in times of hardship.
- Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins and win for us eternal life in heaven.
- Jesus holds the Bible because he is the Word. The nail marks in his hands show us that he was crucified, but he has risen, defeating death and the devil.
- The tomb is empty. The stone is rolled away. Jesus is the resurrection and the life.



Jesus said to [Martha],
"I am the resurrection and the life.
Whoever believes in me will live,
even though he dies.
And everyone who lives and believes in me
will never die."

John 11:25-26

From cross to crown!
We at Martin Luther College pray that
you find comfort, joy, and peace
in the knowledge of
all that your Savior has done for you—
from cross to crown,
for this life and the next.

Please pray for us too—
that our students grow stronger every day
in their faith, their ministry skills,
and their eagerness to serve
as pastors, teachers, and staff ministers for you.
**If you're able, we invite you to support MLC
with a financial gift as well.**



Donate

Blessed Easter!

Rich Gurgel
MLC President

Passing the Mantle

You are Elijahs! Pastors, teachers, staff ministers, ministers of the gospel of all kinds, as you share the Word of God, you are doing the work of Elijah. And somewhere in your circle of influence is an Elisha, a young person who will take up the mantle of gospel ministry from you (2 Kings 2). Even now, they are watching you, wanting to imitate you, and waiting for a word of encouragement from you.

Many, many MLC students have an Elijah, someone who exemplified joyful ministry and encouraged them to consider ministry. Here are a few:

Jordyn Heckendorf MLC '24
(Shepherd of the Hills-West Bend WI)



HER ELIJAH:
Rachael Kreis
MLC '09

Mrs. Kreis brought to my attention the gifts God gave me and how I can use those in a ministry setting. She is a great example of how to build personal relationships. Also, she will go above and beyond to help people, which is what I want to replicate. Her example at Kettle Moraine LHS inspires me to serve Christ by serving others.

Nathan Pausma MLC '24
(St. Luke-Oakfield WI)



HIS ELIJAHS
Pastor Dave Haag
NWC '81, WLS '85
Pastor Josh Olson
MLC '04, WLS '08

Pastor David Haag (pictured), a Spanish teacher and soccer coach at Winnebago Lutheran Academy, showed me what a mature Christian man is like and what trust in God looks like. He pushed me to be a better version of myself on the soccer pitch and always believed in me.

Pastor Josh Olson's joy and personality made me realize that a pastor doesn't have to be the suit-and-tie type of guy. You can just be yourself and have fun doing ministry.

Noah Ungemach MLC '24
(First German-Manitowoc WI)



HIS ELIJAH
Pastor Benjamin Schaefer
MLC '05

Pastor Schaefer was my pastor at First German for most of my childhood and high school years. Throughout those years, he encouraged me to use my gifts in ministry. His selfless leadership of our congregation and love for the people he served showed me how wonderful it is to serve a congregation. Pastor Schaefer is a constant reminder that hard work and dedication to the ministry can be a blessing to the congregation, your family, and yourself. I pray that other young adults can be moved to serve the Lord in the public ministry through the dedication of their pastors, teachers, and staff ministers.

Annaliese Wenz MLC '24
(Apostles-Billings MT)



HER ELIJAHS
Matt Proeber MLC '15, WLS '19 and
Sarah Proeber MLC '17

When I was a sophomore in high school, my church had a vicar named Matt Proeber. He and his wife, Sarah, talked about MLC and serving in the public ministry and encouraged me to consider serving God in that way. Their love for Jesus shined bright, and I hope to share Jesus' love with others just as they did.



Check out our **Project Elijah** classroom resources for grade school students! Using these activities to help your K-8 students think about becoming a called worker is one way you can be an Elijah and "pass the mantle" to each Elisha in your classroom.

