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Insights from LTS and MLUC

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Insights from LTS and MLUC WEBINAR I

William H. Harrison, Kristine Lund, and Donald W. Sjoberg*

Don Sjoberg

President William Harrison, Principal Dean Kristine Lund, would you offer your greetings now, please.

William Harrison (he/him)

Thank you very much. It is good to see you, Don, and to see everybody this evening. I'm Bill Harrison, President of Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS), based in Saskatoon and serving all of Western Canada and beyond.

Tonight I join you from the Unceded Territory of the Syilx people. LTS is pleased to share in the presentation of this webinar. Knowing history is important for knowing and sharing the Gospel. Since at least the 19th century and John Henry Newman, we have recognized that our understanding of the gospel is a product of both the heritage that we receive and the context in which we encounter it. The texts that we read have their own contexts which affect their meanings. So our history affects what we communicate.

Moreover, since the beginnings of Christianity, we have known that the history of the listener affects what they hear. That's one of the meanings of Pentecost. We as recipients and communicators of the gospel and others as hearers also are affected by history, so we thank the speakers and we invite you to engage closely with their words. We pray that you hear in them God's good news for the world. Thank you.

Don Sjoberg

Thank you so much, President Harrison. Principal Dean Kristine Lund, we invite you to greet us at this time.

Kristine Lund (she/her)

Thank you, Don. I'm very grateful to be able to be with you all tonight, and I want to begin by thanking the organizing group. This is no small task that you have undertaken, and I think we all recognize how stories live within us and how stories can be lost as our elders die and pass on and take those stories with them. So I think it's a very important time in the history of our church that you're doing all these interviews and capturing these narratives, these stories that help us understand ourselves, and whom we've been, inform us in the present and, as you note, will push us forward into the future.

History at Martin Luther University College (MLUC), which many of you will probably have remembered used to be named Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, has required us to do a little reflection on our history. Beginning in 1911, ours was a very small school that began to train pastors in Canada. It quickly developed into a liberal arts college, and it continued to expand and became Waterloo Lutheran University and then on to Wilfrid Laurier, and at that point we became a federated college with Laurier as Waterloo Lutheran Seminary.

* See the Foreword of this issue of *Consensus* for biographical information.

But as we've lived into our programs, into our mission and vision—our calling into the world—we began to recognize that we weren't only a seminary anymore, and so the Board of Governors needed to think about "Who was Waterloo Lutheran Seminary now?"

In about 2015, the Board began to think about it. The name Martin Luther University College was chosen. "Martin Luther"—to give a nod to our history and to what our heritage is and who we've been in Canada as a place to do post-secondary education. And at the same time to call ourselves a University College because we were more than just a school that was focused on educating pastors, even though that mission remains still very important to us.

And so, since 2018 we have been living into what does it mean to be Martin Luther University College. Part of that has been reflecting on our history. Before 1911, the Waterloo Board of Trade gifted land for the predecessor institution. However, as we've learned, and lived into our history more, we recognize that it wasn't their land to give. As Karen Kuhnert began with a number of acknowledgements of the Land, we've come to learn that we reside on the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Neutral Peoples and are part of the Haldimand Tract which was part of the Dish with One Spoon Treaty, and we've had to face the reality that we actually live and work on stolen land. And we have asked ourselves, "What does that mean?" "How do we live into the Gospel in that context?"

And so, as we continue to learn and grow, I really look forward to tonight's webinar and future webinars that will help all of us reflect critically on our history and to live ever more fully into what it means to live for the sake of the Gospel on our particular land in Canada and also in our world.

So thank you so much for your invitation for me to be with you tonight.

Don Sjoberg

And thank you, Principal Dean Kristine, for that historical perspective. I'm thinking about the start of the seminary in the West, which happened to take place in the parsonage in Spruce Grove, Alberta.¹ All are adapting to the needs of the time and what might be possible for the important task of helping people to be prepared for the Gospel.

We look forward to you both speaking a bit more about the seminaries at our next webinar. Thank you to both of you for co-sponsoring our webinars; we appreciate it very much.

Endnotes

¹ Walter Freitag, "'Mountain of difficulties': The Prehistory of Lutheran College and Seminary at Saskatoon," *Consensus*, 14, no. 1, Article 2, 1988, <https://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol14/iss1/2>, and Gordon A. Jensen, "The Beginnings of Lutheran Theological Seminary Saskatoon," *Consensus*, 36, no 1, Article 4, 2015, <https://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol36/iss1/4>.