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Insights from MLUC and LTS WEBINAR II

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

Don Sjoberg

On the way to church on Sunday, I was giving a ride to Anne Strack. Some of you may know her. In talking about her family, I learned for the first time (though I've known Anne for many years) that her mother, Johanna Tappert, was the first woman teacher at a Lutheran seminary in Canada—what a story.¹ And then I mentioned Anne Strack's name to Karen Kuhnert, and Karen made connections to part of the story of the family connected to St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Kitchener, and how these stories relate to our two seminaries.

I'm pleased that we have representatives here tonight from Martin Luther University College, Rev. Dr. Kristine Lund, and Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon, Rev. Dr. William Harrison. Thank you for joining us, and also thank you to the seminaries for co-sponsoring our webinar series. We appreciate that very much. Kris, would you share a few words with us and greetings from Martin Luther University College (Luther)?

Kristine Lund

Thank you very much. Don, I echo your comments earlier about how nice it is to see some familiar faces. I am certainly seeing some people from out West that I haven't seen for a long time. I was asked just to make some comments about what's happening at Luther. Some of you may have known us better as Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. In 2018, the Board of Governors decided to change the name to Martin Luther University College in order to better represent the programs that we offer here. We have an undergraduate degree and other degrees, so the word "seminary" had not fit for a while.

So we are living into that name, Martin Luther University College, recognizing "Martin Luther" as a nod to our history, and at the same time recognizing he was a controversial figure in the Middle Ages. And so, we've done a couple of conferences looking at Martin Luther and Anti-Semitism² and Martin Luther and Islam³ to educate ourselves on our history—to critically think about that and live into what does that mean in the 21st century as we try to live within a multicultural context.

This lecture/webinar is very timely because the question of "How do we live the gospel in this age?" is very relevant, and certainly, as a post-secondary education institution of the church (primarily relating to the Eastern Synod), it is a question that we often ask ourselves. Dr. Mary Joy Philip led a very extensive review of our Master of Divinity degree over a year ago because of this very question, asking how do we prepare students to live the gospel, embody it amongst our neighbors and be representative of Christ in our communities? And so we now have a Master of Divinity degree that is two years full-time plus one year of internship that pays particular attention to context, and we added a course in Indigenous wisdom and what intersectionality looks at as embodied faith and spirituality as it relates to community. This has increased the degree of community engagement within the degree so as to prepare people to be rostered leaders in a church that is continually

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

changing, and in a way that we can't even really quite foresee yet, but with diverse skills and abilities to be responsive to the context they are in.

It might be interesting for you to note that all of our candidates for our MDiv. degree are younger than 40 years old. I can't tell you why that is. I can't tell you if that is a trend or if it's just something that's occurred. But currently all of our Lutheran candidates are under 40 years old, so that's been an interesting learning experience as we engage these students. A number of them also are enrolled in our dual-degree in Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy, so they will graduate with some significant skills in mental health, being able to both respond to the needs of their congregation and their community.

I just wanted to give a quick advertisement to some work that Dr. Allen Jorgensen and Dr. Laura McGregor have been doing. They were fortunate to receive a grant from the Louisville Institute, and in the last two years they've been doing some research with regards to spiritual care for parents raising children with disabilities and what the experiences have been for those parents, both those who love the church and those who have left the church because they've not found it a welcoming place, and what we can learn from those voices that we don't normally hear from.

So the first event that will be sponsored is a webinar on December 2nd entitled "Beyond Saints and Superheroes: Spiritual Care for Parents Raising Children with Disabilities." That's actually the Series that will have four webinars, and Alan and Laura will talk a little bit about their research. Then it will be followed by a keynote address by Rev. Dr. Aaron Raffety entitled "Following Jesus Toward Justice in Disability Ministry." That is an area of ministry that I don't think has had enough attention in our church, and an important one as we live with people with Alzheimer's, as we live with children with autism—and everything in between. How do we live out God's abundant love with those individuals and also those families? And if you're interested in that, we also have a continuing education certificate that is four courses completely online called the Certificate in "Disability, Inclusive Ministry and Christian Faith," and again an opportunity to explore the intersection among disability, spirituality, mental health, and care-giving, with a specific goal of creating more diverse and welcoming faith communities. So if you're interested in that, please be in touch.

I could tell you lots about Luther; it's a pretty lively and exciting place, but I think I've probably hit my 4 minutes, so I'll leave it there for now.

Don Sjoberg

Thank you, Kris. And Bill Harrison, how are you going to manage January 1st 2023 without Gordon Jensen?

William H. Harrison

Well, we have to thank Dr. Gordon Jensen for his many years of impressive service to LTS and to Lutheran history. The good news is, and Gordon would agree, that even as we say goodbye to Gordon, we welcome Rev. Dr. Kayko Driedger Hesslein as our new William Hordern Professor of Theology, so that's an exciting piece of our future.

On that note, greetings from Lutheran Theological Seminary, based in Saskatoon and serving Lutherans from east of Thunder Bay to west of Tofino and north to Whitehorse and Yellowknife. LTS is a result of inter-Lutheran encounters in Canada. The product of two seminaries with different Lutheran heritages, one largely German and the other predominantly Norwegian,⁴ and with George Evenson as a significant part of the development of LTS, so hearing about him earlier was wonderful. For a time LTS also served

Missouri Synod Lutherans in Western Canada, which is exciting. This inter-Lutheran engagement is a fundamental part of our identity. It establishes two trajectories: 1) a clear commitment to Lutheran identity and 2) a basic willingness to cooperate with other Christians, and both of these in the context of our mission to live for the sake of the Gospel.

Remembering today for the church of tomorrow, our school continues to follow these trajectories. With grants from the Lilly Endowment, we are working on a project called “Our Classroom is Western Canada: We Meet There in Mission,” engaging with Lutherans throughout our area and taking up the challenge cast in the ELCIC’s 2019 statement “Reimagining Our Church,”⁵ which calls us to be more missional and diaconal in orientation. In this project, we are developing immersive courses (so immersion-style) that happen across Western Canada. These courses are directed toward re-thinking church leadership in an inclusive way. We seek to prepare team leadership for various church structures rather than focusing solely on training pastors predominantly for single parishes.

For example, Rev. Dr. Kayko Driedger Hesslein, as I said, we welcome as our new William Hordern Professor. She is teaching a course called “Leadership in the Church” with modules in Regina in Saskatchewan, Red Deer and Bentley in Alberta, and Winnipeg in Manitoba. This is a profound change from the predecessor course, which was called “Leadership in the Parish” and set in a Saskatoon classroom. Our students are taught to think about the whole church. We are strengthening our training for deacons/Deacons, which has been a long-time priority for us. We are inviting lay-people into our classes more than ever before.

If you are interested in doing a class simply to learn, we’ve lowered your fee to \$75—courtesy of support from Student Aid funds to foster lay education. Our classes will meet in a variety of places and include people training for a variety of ministries: lay, diaconal, and pastoral. Enriching our offerings for lay-leaders, we are moving our low-cost, accessible “Leading In Faith Today” (L.I.F.T.) lay-training programs online in cooperation with Church X.⁶ Church X is a shared ministry of United Church, Anglican, and now Lutheran people who seek to make theological education widely available.

Working with Lutherans, we team up with other Christians. Indeed, LTS is engaging more closely than ever with our Anglican and United partners in this Saskatoon Theological Union.⁷ We have formed a common faculty by developing a shared curriculum, and are finding ways to share staff and our building systems to support our common mission.

Currently, we at LTS are seeking a Grace Professor of Leadership to serve LTS and the STU. Through all of this, our priorities continue to foster Lutheran understanding of the good news and its impact on the world, sustaining the core of our Lutheran identity and work together with other Christians in service of God’s work of transformation in our world.

Thank you for an opportunity to say a word or two about LTS, and we welcome your engagement with us in any way that you can imagine.

Don Sjoberg

Thank you both for your encouraging words. It sounds like, in the words of Jesus, “harvest time.” We can indeed, and must, pray to the Lord of the Harvest for labourers to serve the Gospel.

Endnotes

¹ Documentation on the life of Johanna Tappert can be found through the Saskatchewan Council for Archives and Archivists (MemorySask), see <https://test.memoriesask.ca/tappert-strack-lindner-collection>.

The description for this collection also notes details on Ernest Lindner, who may have immigrated to Canada as an “Ag Lab” (see Busch in Webinar III Transcript in this Issue). From the MemorySask Collection description,

“Johanna Tappert was born on October 4, 1892 in Meriden, Connecticut. She worked at the Lutheran College on 8th Street in Saskatoon from 1927 to 1933 as a high school teacher, Dean of the Girls Dormitory, and, eventually, Assistant Principal. She served as dorm mother for the girls and taught English to German immigrants on the weekends. At these classes, she met Ernest Lindner, who was subsequently given a room at the dorm in order to do his artwork. Johanna Tappert married Eugene Strack sometime around 1933. She died in Edmonton, Alberta on November 13, 1984.”

Lutheran Church resources describe Tappert as becoming Principal and not just “assistant Principal.”

² For more on Martin Luther and Anti-Semitism see the Volume 41, Issue 2 (2020) of *Consensus*. This Issue of Conference Proceedings arises from the first annual Luther Legacy Conference held on January 20, 2020, in the Senate and Board Chambers of Wilfrid Laurier University as sponsored by Martin Luther University College. Begin reading with the Introduction to the Issue “Martin Luther and Antisemitism” by Daniel Maoz (Guest Editor). Maoz, Daniel, “Martin Luther and Antisemitism,” *Consensus*, 41, no. 2, Article 1, 2020, DOI: 10.51644/OOBL6989, <https://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol41/iss2/1>. For older works, see for example, Lai, Alan Ka Lun, “Preaching and Teaching After Auschwitz,” *Consensus*, 29, no. 2, Article 10, 2004, <https://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol29/iss2/10>.

³ For more on MLUC, Martin Luther and Islam, see the *Consensus* Articles in Volume 41, Issue 1 (2020) <https://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol41/iss1> that arises from the gathering of 130 professionals and students assembled at the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences in Bergen, Norway, for a conference on sustainability and climate in religion. To this event came priests and lay leaders from Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox churches, Islamic lawyers, Indigenous Sami communities, representatives of the Church of Norway, Buddhist practitioners, public-school educators, theology professors, and the Mayor of Bergen.

⁴ The entire *Consensus*, Volume 36, Issue 1 (2015) <https://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol36/iss1> is dedicated to the history of LTS. Jensen addresses the “cooperation between the German supported ‘Lutheran College and Seminary’ and the Norwegian supported ‘Luther Theological Seminary’ that would begin in Saskatoon in 1939” in his Article “The Beginnings of Lutheran Theological Seminary Saskatoon,” *Consensus*, 36, no. 1, Article 4, 2015, <https://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol36/iss1/4>.

⁵ The document “Reimagining Our Church” is available at: <https://elcic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/ReimaginingOurChurch-PublicMinistryintheELCIC.pdf>.

⁶ For more on LIFT, this definition was provided on the “About” page of the website <https://layacademylift.ca>: “The Lay Academy was a collaborative program of the Lutheran Theological Seminary and four Western Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), that sought to provide continuing education opportunities for lay people and for those being prepared for lay leadership. The establishment of the Lay Academy came in response to the leadership needs of congregations and the interest expressed by lay people for a comprehensive program of study.” See also, <https://layacademylift.ca/about/>

⁷ For more on the Saskatoon Theological Union (STU) and the context of “Our Classroom is Western Canada: We Meet There in Mission,” see <https://lutherantheological.ca/its-news/three-colleges-one-faculty-announcement>.