



Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Dear ministry partners in the Northern Texas–Northern Louisiana Synod:

The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) is grateful to share highlights from our seminary in this 2025 report to supporting synods. Thank you for your continued support of our innovative and thriving seminary. As we reflect on the past year and look ahead to 2025–2026, I am pleased to share some key highlights and our aspirations for the future:

- This year, LSTC bids farewell to [President James Nieman](#) as he retires after thirteen years of dedicated leadership. His vision and guidance have left an indelible mark on the seminary, from fostering a culture of innovation to championing LSTC’s mission of theological education and social justice. In a heartfelt [video shared with the community](#), President Nieman reflected on his tenure and expressed his hope for LSTC’s continued growth. As we navigate this transition, an interim president will be announced in February and the next president selected by the end of the spring semester.
- A major milestone this year was the conclusion of our 2021–2024 Strategic Plan, *For Such a Time as This*, and the introduction of our new 2024–2029 Strategic Plan, [On the Way](#). This forward-thinking roadmap reflects LSTC’s commitment to remaining adaptive and innovative as we prepare future leaders for ministry and public engagement. Centered on themes of sustainability, inclusion, and mission alignment, the plan focuses on deepening partnerships, enhancing educational accessibility, and supporting the holistic formation of students. As we look to the future, this strategic framework ensures that LSTC remains a beacon of theological excellence and a force for justice in the church and the world.
- This year marked the formal establishment of the [Office of Enterprise Innovation \(OEI\)](#), a bold initiative to extend LSTC’s reach and impact through digital programming. Led by Vice President Keisha Dyson, the OEI is the creative engine behind [Project Starling](#), our new commitment to and program for asynchronous learning. This initiative provides innovative opportunities for students, including Synod Authorized Ministers (SAM) and those pursuing certificates in theological education, to engage with content at their own pace. We look forward to launching the Project Starling platform in June. On this platform, we will introduce an asynchronous TEEM certificate as well as a training program for Synod Authorized Ministers. We will also provide learning resources for lay audiences interested in deepening their theological studies. By introducing professional development courses, continuing education programs, and advanced digital tools, Project Starling exemplifies our commitment to offering theological education for all.

- In Fall 2024, the LSTC Board of Directors elected Greg Lewis and Mark Bartusch as Chairperson and Vice Chairperson respectively. We have also welcomed new board members, including Teresa Cintron, Paul Erbes, Joseph Falese, Stacie Fidlar, Preston Fields, Greg Kaufmann, Mercy Ndosi-Shoo, Larry Tietjen, and Patricia Cornelius Woods. Their orientation underscored our commitment to strategic governance and collaboration. We look forward to their ecumenical expertise enriching our community for many years to come.
- LSTC is thrilled to announce the appointment of [Dr. Christian Scharen](#) as the Gordon Braatz Chair of Worship. A distinguished scholar and teacher, Dr. Scharen brings deep expertise and a passion for exploring the transformative power of worship in faith communities. In this new role, he will advance LSTC's commitment to preparing leaders who are deeply rooted in liturgical tradition while engaging contemporary challenges and opportunities. His leadership will enrich the seminary's worship life and academic programs, equipping students to serve with creativity, wisdom, and a strong theological foundation.
- This year's upcoming Homecoming celebration will bring alumni, students, and faculty together for a vibrant time of reconnection and learning, anchored by the Queer Symposium. This impactful event will highlight LSTC's commitment to affirming and inclusive theological education, featuring workshops, panel discussions, and keynote presentations exploring the intersections of faith, identity, and justice. Participants will engage deeply with critical topics, fostering dialogue that strengthens our community and equips leaders for ministry in diverse contexts. The combination of Homecoming festivities and the Queer Symposium promises to create spaces where all are welcomed, valued, and empowered to serve. Visit [LSTC.edu/events](#) for information about this event and others.
- We look ahead to our 165th commencement exercises, to be held again this year at St. Paul and the Redeemer Episcopal Church, at 4945 South Dorchester in Hyde Park. This welcoming and well-equipped venue provides an ideal setting for our commencement celebrations, offering ample space for the ceremony as well as opportunities for fellowship and connection. This year's commencement speaker will be Bishop Yehiel Curry, a steadfast leader and LSTC alumnus.

To learn more about LSTC, please visit [www.lstc.edu](#).

Sincerely,

James Nieman, President Emeritus (retired Jan. 31, 2025)
Michael Cooper-White, Interim President
Greg Lewis, Chair, Board of Directors