

SUMMER 2021

## WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY SPOTLIGHT

### PROFESSOR BRENNER RETIRES

Professor John Brenner, who taught church history and systematic theology, retired on June 30, 2021. He served as the seminary's dean of students from 1995 to 2016 and was the chairman of the Church History Department from 2001 to 2019.



A 1973 graduate of Northwestern College, Prof. Brenner received his MDiv in 1977 and a PhD in Religious Studies (Historical Theology) in 2012 from Marquette University. He served at Northwestern Lutheran Academy, Mobridge, So.Dak., from 1974 to 1975 and Northwestern College, Watertown, from 1977 to 1979. Then he served as a pastor at Redeemer, Big Rapids, Mich., from 1979 to 1984, and dean of students at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, from 1985 to 1991. He joined the seminary faculty in 1991.

The grandson of a seminary professor, Brenner has written three books, *Conversion: Not by My Own Choosing*, *The Election Controversy among Lutherans in the Twentieth Century*, and *Jars of Clay: A History of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (1863-2013)*. He has edited or contributed to five more books and was the News & Comments editor for *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* from 1997 to 2019. He has written almost 20 journal articles and been an essayist and lecturer throughout the world.

He has also served the greater church. He was chairman of the WELS Seeking Our Neighbor Committee (1993-1999), chairman of the WELS Deans' Conference (1995-2016), member of Board of Appeals, Southeastern Wisconsin District (2002-2008, 2010-2022), editor, *WELS Historical Institute Journal* (2009-present), member of WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations (2007-2019) and chairman (2015-2019), CICR contact with ELFK in Germany (2008-2015), and chairman of the Theological Commission, Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (2011-present).

He and his wife, Patricia, have one child and three grandchildren.

### GRADUATION WEEK

At the vicar assignment service on May 19, 40 middlers were assigned to congregations in the United States, Canada, and Colombia. Twenty-three of those are part of the Vicar in a Mission Setting program, and one vicar was assigned to serve a WELS world missions partner in Colombia.

The following day, 33 men were assigned to various ministries. Of those, 28 were seniors receiving their first call, one was from the class of 2020, and four were from the class of 2019. In addition, one was reassigned to a one-year call. Seven of the calls were to serve WELS home and world mission fields.

The service was streamed live and over 1100 computers logged onto Livestream and almost another 200 on Facebook Live. Friends and family checked in from places such as Minnesota, Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, Georgia, Tennessee, Alaska, Texas, Illinois, Florida, Arizona, Oregon, Thailand, and Hong Kong.

Then on May 21, 28 graduates received their diplomas at the graduation service. In addition, two pastors received their Master of Sacred Theology.





# PASTORAL STUDIES INSTITUTE

a partnership of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and WELS Joint Missions

## A LUTHERAN SEMINARY FOR LATIN AMERICA

The Lord has blessed the efforts of the WELS One Latin American team (1LA) to bring the peace of the gospel to a region of the world where the gospel has been hidden, even inside the visible Christian church, by man-made teachings.

The team is proclaiming the Word through Academia Cristo, which has three levels of study. The first level of courses is app-based/video-based; in the other two levels, the students meet with an instructor for live classes.



The numbers continue to grow, but almost 250,000 people from throughout Latin America have downloaded the app for the first level of courses, and 1279 people have finished those courses. In those courses the students find out about God's plan of salvation, about the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus, about law and gospel, repentance, baptism, growth in faith, and joyful service to God. They learn to navigate the Bible and to share with others what God says in his Word.

In the live classes they learn more about being a disciple of Jesus Christ and their role in making more disciples. They grow in their understanding of God, his Word, his people, and their mission. They grow in their ability, by God's grace, to give glory to God through a life of service to him and the people around them.

We are at an exciting time in this gospel ministry. This summer the first students will graduate from the program, having completed all of the live courses. By the end of 2021 there will be 20-25 graduates from Academia Cristo. Some of those will continue to serve in outreach ministries, and some will continue on to a seminary program to be trained as pastors.

The PSI Team of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is consulting with 1LA to develop a seminary training program which will begin in the fall of 2021. The seminary students will continue to serve as they study. The curriculum will be designed and delivered with an eye towards the needs of the churches in Latin America.

Please pray for the millions of people in Latin America who don't know the grace of God in Jesus, our Savior. Please pray for our mission efforts through Academia Cristo. Please pray for those who are completing the program that they continue to grow in faith and to serve with zeal. Please pray for the newly developing seminary program, that God would raise up faithful shepherds who will love and feed his sheep.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**August 25: Opening Service**

**August 26: Classes Begin**

**September 20: WLS Alumni Annual Meeting**

**September 20-21: Symposium**

**October 2: Friends of the Seminary Day**

**December 12: Christmas Concerts**

## ANOTHER WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY

**GROW<sup>IN</sup>  
GRACE**  
PARTNERING  
WITH PASTORS

In summer 2020 a generous donor offered a matching grant to the Grow in Grace endowment fund. We have been blessed that a second donor stepped forward to offer another matching grant, matching up to \$10,000 for Grow in Grace to use in any manner needed. Grow in Grace exists to encourage pastors to excel in all their callings. If you are inclined to give by making your donation count as double, please visit our website for more information.

