

Luther Preparatory School

Our calling

Luther Preparatory School (LPS), Watertown, Wis., has a single mission: To encourage and prepare young people for a lifetime of service in the public ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

LPS is owned and operated by WELS. The synod has given LPS the privilege and responsibility to carry out this important work. The LPS Governing Board is grateful to our church body, which supports the work of LPS with its prayers and gifts.

Historically, 55 percent of LPS graduates have enrolled at Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn., (our synod's college of ministry) since LPS was formed in 1995. Over the past 14 years, 37 percent of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) graduates were once LPS students.

78 (71 percent) of the 109 graduates from the LPS class of 2018 will enroll at MLC this fall. That is our highest percentage ever. In the prep department's 153 years of existence on our synod's Watertown campus, only one time have more than 30 graduates continued their preparations for the pastoral ministry either at the former Northwestern College or present day MLC; two times since 1995 Luther Prep has sent on 27 graduates for pastoral studies. Thirty-five graduates definitely plan to enter the MLC pastor track in fall. And there might be a few more in the wings.

Our current situation

Enrollment has remained steady the past few years. LPS opened school year 2017-18 with an enrollment of 416. We are expecting a similar or slightly higher enrollment next fall.

Our students hail from 25 states, 8 foreign countries, 183 congregations, and all 12 WELS districts. More than two-thirds of our students come from lay families.

Recruitment to LPS, with an eye on future full-time gospel ministry, remains a top priority. We always invite and welcome all WELS upper-grade students to visit our campus, "shadow" a prep student, and spend a night in one of the dormitories to get a feel for prep life. Every school year we host "Phoenix For A Day," a fall play, a musical, children's theater, grade school basketball tournaments, etc. These events bring more than two thousand WELS grade school students on our campus. Over the summer we offer several basketball, volleyball, and soccer camps, which afford hundreds of WELS grade school students and their parents an opportunity to take a close look at their synod school.

The LPS curriculum is designed to prepare students to meet or exceed the requirements of MLC. LPS recognizes the need and desire for future musicians in our Lutheran congregations and classrooms. More than 90% of our students take piano lessons, with several of them advancing to take organ lessons. Many are involved in the string, brass, and wind ensembles. Because the biblical languages are critical for the work of future pastors and in order to prepare all students for language studies, all freshmen take first year Latin and all students take at least three years of Latin, German, or Spanish.

LPS has received accreditation from both WELSSA (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation) and AdvanceED-NCA. LPS will continue to meet the standards set forth in the accreditation process to maintain our accredited status.

Because we are a mission-driven school for gospel proclamation, LPS offers age-appropriate experiences in speaking the gospel. All of our seniors take part in our Taste of Ministry program, in which prospective pastor students spend two days with an area WELS pastor and our prospective teacher students spend two days in a classroom with an area elementary school teacher. Project Timothy is a program designed to provide mission, ministry, and cross-cultural experiences to LPS students. 60 students will assist with outreach and education programs of mission congregations this summer in Antigua, St. Lucia, Georgia, Tennessee, Florida, Texas, California, Virginia, Canada, Nicaragua, and Germany. Also, senior boys are given the opportunity to prepare and speak an evening devotion to the student body.

Each year the entire junior class visits Martin Luther College. By the time our students graduate, each one will have met at least four times with an MLC recruiter. An array of missionaries, professors, teachers, pastors, and MLC and WLS students present topical ministry workshops at our annual Ministry Day. The entire student body takes part in Ministry Day. Sophomores also take an annual trip to the seminary. And seniors in the LPS pastor track visit the seminary each fall for worship, class visitation, and a tour. A gospel ministry atmosphere permeates campus life.

The Word is central in all we do. Worship services are held twice daily; all classes are taught from a scriptural perspective; and students are encouraged in their personal devotional lives. The Holy Spirit working through the means of grace continues to encourage and prepare our young people for lives of gospel ministry and service.

For the past six years Luther Prep has been able to livestream its morning chapel services, concerts, football, baseball, and soccer games, and many athletic events held in the gymnasium. Family members and friends—the vast majority living a distance away from Watertown—have greatly appreciated this service. The quality of livestreaming has improved immensely in recent years.

Technology use in the classroom also increased in recent years as each LPS student is given a Chromebook, which is used for 1:1 computing in several classes.

Luther Prep also participated in the Racine, Milwaukee, and Wisconsin Parental Choice Programs offered by the State of Wisconsin. In these Parental Choice Programs, parents receive a voucher from the state that pays the cost of education (tuition only) at participating private and religious schools.

The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) is for families residing in the city of Milwaukee. The Racine Parental Choice Program (RPCP) is for families living in the Racine Unified School District. To be eligible to apply for MPCP and RPCP, families must have an annual income at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level.

The Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP) is for families living throughout the state of Wisconsin. To be eligible to apply for WPCP, families must have an annual income at or below 220% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Thirty-five families made use of these programs this past school year. We are pleased to report that all who participated last year and those who will participate this coming year are WELS members.

The governing board has voted to continue with the programs for next school year. The governing board will continue to evaluate prep's participation every year. If a condition is attached by the state which would force LPS to join hands in false doctrine (sin), then LPS would exit the choice programs immediately. If a challenge arises which negatively impacts the purpose of LPS, then LPS would also exit the choice programs. The governing board has exit strategies in place.

Having served Jesus as a tutor at Michigan Lutheran Seminary; a teacher at Atonement Lutheran School in Milwaukee, Wis.; and a professor, coach, and athletic director at LPS for the past 36 years, Coach Paul Bertolus will be retiring at the end of this school year. We thank him for his faithful service to Jesus and the gospel ministry.

Through the generous gifts from the people of our church body totaling just shy of \$1 million, Luther Prep was able to refurbish its chapel and enhance the organ two years ago. The LPS Governing Board considered such an expense to be worthwhile because 1) the chapel (worship) is the heartbeat of Luther Prep's life, 2) the organ remains the chief instrument in Lutheran worship, 3) this ministerial education campus has enjoyed the blessing of an organ for more than fifty years, 4) an appreciation for Lutheran worship is instilled in our students, and 5) Luther Prep produces more organists for service in the church than perhaps any other high school in America.

A look ahead

After being in hiatus for several years, Luther Prep will reinstate its wrestling program this coming school year.

Two years ago the WELS Capital Projects Committee asked all schools to provide a master site plan. Zimmerman Architectural Studio recognized \$12.5 million in conceptual costs that could be done on the synod's Watertown campus, the majority of which was for a new music auditorium to replace the existing 106-year-old auditorium. In the coming biennium, Luther Prep plans to obtain concepts and estimated costs for a future music auditorium. The old auditorium would be repurposed to its original use as a gymnasium, which would be used as a secondary gymnasium for lower-level teams and intramurals.

We rejoice that our synod, under the hand of a loving, saving, guiding God, plans to open several home missions each year for the foreseeable future. World mission opportunities continue to knock on the door of WELS. WELS has also witnessed an increase in the need for WELS trained teachers inside and outside of America. It naturally follows: The more congregations we start and the more schools of varying types open, the more called workers we need.

We are delighted, humbled, and grateful for Luther Prep's role in our synod's gospel work. We are thankful for all the people in our church body who continually support our ministerial purpose in so many ways. We ask and pray that the members of our church body continue to identify grade school boys and girls who might someday with appropriate encouragement and preparation become "beautiful feet who bring good news and proclaim salvation" (Isaiah 52:7). Above all, we rejoice in the Holy Spirit touching the lives of all of our students through the life-giving gospel. This same Spirit will use our students' future service to bring the gospel to the elderly, the middle-aged, their contemporaries, the young, those yet to be born . . . ALL!

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