The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has two outstanding seminaries: one in St. Louis and one in Fort Wayne. Each takes its role in the holy Christian church very seriously as it prepares men for the one God-ordained office in His church: the pastoral ministry. This preparation is “Christ-centered, biblically based, confessionally Lutheran and evangelically active” (Fort Wayne) and “serves the church and world by providing theological education and leadership centered in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ for the formation of pastors” (St. Louis).

In addition to the traditional Master of Divinity degree — the general degree held by the majority of our parish pastors — the seminaries also offer advanced degrees for both national and international students. These degrees include a Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.), Master of Arts (M.A.), Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies (M.A.P.S.), Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.).

As part of the response to this Great Commission, the LCMS developed and implemented the **Global Seminary Initiative (GSI)**. GSI has a twofold purpose:

- To provide graduate-level scholarships to international students studying at either of the seminaries, and
- To provide financial support for sending seminary faculty overseas for temporary teaching assignments (to partner seminaries and emerging church-partner seminaries).

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. (Matt. 28:19-20)

by the Rev. Dr. James Baneck, 
LCMS Director of Pastoral Education

There are many people working together for the success of the Global Seminary Initiative: LCMS Pastoral Education, LCMS seminaries, LCMS Church Relations, LCMS Office of International Mission, LCMS Mission Advancement, LCMS International Regional Directors.
The Global Seminary Initiative transforms the lives and futures of our partner churches and the pastors who serve them. Below are their stories.

**BRAZIL**
- CSL
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil

“My history of theological formation started in 2010 [with] my ministerial formation at Seminário Concórdia in São Leopoldo, Rio Grande do Sul-Brazil. Many are the blessings in the IELB, or Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil. [The] freedom to share and preach the Gospel is certainly a blessing we have in Brazil. … I believe I will serve as a pastor, and maybe one day I will also serve as a professor if the church decides it [is] fit for me to help with theological formation. … I love the ministry, and my plan is to serve the church of my Lord Jesus Christ. GSI means that I can have access to incredible theological formation and be prepared to serve the church in a way that I would not be able to do in my life under other circumstances. That is, without the financial support of GSI, I would not be able to pursue the degree I am pursuing. It is truly a blessing for me, and I am sure it is a blessing for the whole church. I think … GSI is one aspect of the great support the LCMS has shown to sister churches, such as the Lutheran Church of Brazil, in theological formation. Moreover, this support impacts not only individual students here at the seminaries but the entire future of theological formation in the church around the world. More than half of the faculty of our seminaries in Brazil have their degrees from other CSL or CTSFW. This means that the support of the LCMS through initiatives such as GSI helps more than a few pastors from other parts of the world: it helps in the theological formation of generations of pastors.”
- Rev. Alan Furst, GSI student at CSL

**URUGUAY**
- CSL
- The Lutheran Church of Uruguay

**ARGENTINA**
- CSL
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina

“… I love the ministry, and my plan is to serve the church of my Lord Jesus Christ. GSI means that I can have access to incredible theological formation and be prepared to serve the church in a way that I would not be able to do in my life under other circumstances. That is, without the financial support of GSI, I would not be able to pursue the degree I am pursuing. It is truly a blessing for me, and I am sure it is a blessing for the whole church. I think … GSI is one aspect of the great support the LCMS has shown to sister churches, such as the Lutheran Church of Brazil, in theological formation. Moreover, this support impacts not only individual students here at the seminaries but the entire future of theological formation in the church around the world. More than half of the faculty of our seminaries in Brazil have their degrees from other CSL or CTSFW. This means that the support of the LCMS through initiatives such as GSI helps more than a few pastors from other parts of the world: it helps in the theological formation of generations of pastors.”
- Rev. Alan Furst, GSI student at CSL

**GUATEMALA**
- CSL
- Lutheran Church in Guatemala

**VENezUELA**
- CSL
- Lutheran Church of Venezuela

**NIGERIA**
- CTSFW
- The Lutheran Church of Nigeria

“I grew up in Calabar, in the southern part of Nigeria — the same town in which I was born a little over 30 years ago. The Pentecostal movement crept in [to the church] and blew its winds through Nigeria, as it did everywhere else, building on the ‘spiritual’ worldview of the people of Nigeria. This is a major problem facing the church in Nigeria: Pentecostalism and ancestral pagan worship in churchly draping and the forceful demand for change from confessionalism to anything else. [I chose to attend seminary] to contribute my quota in the attempts to return the Lutheran Church of Nigeria to a confessionally and biblically strong church, as it was when it first began. After [I was taught by] missionary pastors and professors from the LCMS, such as the Rev. Charles Wokoma, the Rev. Peter Bender, the Rev. Dr. Scott Murray and the Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, the difference was clear! My hopes for the future of my church are, first, solid theological training that is confessionally and biblically strong; second, to be well-prepared to organize the exegetical department of the Jonathan Ekong Memorial Lutheran Seminary in Nigeria; third, and most important, to be able to raise pastors for the Lutheran Church of Nigeria who will be confident in their convictions (doctrine) and hold in their profession (practice) of Christ to the nation of Nigeria and beyond. There is no way [for me to] afford [this] training … [with- out] the support of individuals, corporate bodies and organizations who are willing and able (GSI, especially) to support me in the training.”
- Anonymous, GSI student at CTSFW

**SOUTH AFRICA**
- CSL and CTSFW
- Free Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa, Lutheran Church in Southern Africa

“I grew up in a farm around Piet Retief in South Africa. … We are blessed that our economy is stable. Many people from other countries are coming to South Africa looking for greener pastures. … In 2001, I completed my master’s in theology from the University of Pretoria, and I wanted an institution that is Lutheran. I was then advised to apply at CTSFW. It was good advice, indeed, because at CTSFW, I feel at home. We speak the same language as Lutherans. Presently, I am lecturing in the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Tshwane-Pretoria. I would like to continue working there so that I may take what I learn from CTSFW back home to Africa. Our seminary gets students from many African countries. Lutheran theology teaches the truth. There are no false hopes. It teaches people to see that they are sinners and [to] ask for forgiveness. This is the direct opposite of what Pentecostals are teaching, which makes people believe that, after accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, they no longer sin. [With this teaching] the work of Jesus Christ is minimized. [The Pentecostal preachers] preach what people want to hear. The financial support [through GSI] allows me and other students to be trained and sent back home to be a light to our people. It is rare that people who don’t know us could love us so much that they support our church financially and with prayers, that we may be trained in this excellent way.”
- Rev. John Nkambule, GSI student at CTSFW

**SOUTH SUDAN**
- CSL
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Sudan/Sudan

**LIBERIA**
- CSL
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Liberia

**GERMANY**
- CSL
- Independent Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Germany

**PORTUGAL**
- CTSFW
- Portuguese Evangelical Lutheran Church

**NORWAY**
- CSL
- The Lutheran Church in Norway
“My church, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), is the fastest-growing Lutheran church in the world, with more than 9 million members. The church shows tremendous growth every year as her members are actively participating in mission work. ... More pastors are needed every year to serve, nurture and educate our members with the Word of God. Another challenge that our church faces these days is persecution. ... Groups of Islamic extremists persecute Christians by attacking them and burning church buildings. It is very difficult to get land to build church buildings and bury the dead in the areas where the extremists dominate. I decided to attend seminary at CTSFW in 2015 because I planned to study missiology. I have been teaching at our seminary, Mekane Yesus in Ethiopia, especially on Christian-Muslim relations, and I was longing to study missiology to gain more knowledge in the field and continue teaching at our seminary after my graduation. Without the financial support from GSI, it would be impossible for me to study at CTSFW. I am very thankful to GSI, the LCMS, CTSFW and supporting congregations for ... the opportunity to study at the seminary and equip myself to be a benefit to my church. I thank God [that] He gave to my church such partners in mission to reach out to more people with the Gospel. ... Groups of Islamic extremists persecute Christians by attacking them and burning church buildings. It is very difficult to get land to build church buildings and bury the dead in the areas where the extremists dominate. I decided to attend seminary at CTSFW in 2015 because I planned to study missiology. I have been teaching at our seminary, Mekane Yesus in Ethiopia, especially on Christian-Muslim relations, and I was longing to study missiology to gain more knowledge in the field and continue teaching at our seminary after my graduation. Without the financial support from GSI, it would be impossible for me to study at CTSFW. I am very thankful to GSI, the LCMS, CTSFW and supporting congregations for ... the opportunity to study at the seminary and equip myself to be a benefit to my church. I thank God [that] He gave to my church such partners in mission to reach out to more people with the Gospel. When we walk in the mission field back in Ethiopia, we feel your presence by our side as you share your love and life with us.”

— Rev. Jared Magera, GSI student at CSL

“[I grew up] in a rural village west of Kenya. Our church is blessed with several church workers who are ready to preach Christ to the world. We are blessed as a church to have the pure teaching of the evangelical Lutheran faith. My country, especially in the west of Kenya, is blessed with two rainy seasons, and [most] families practice subsistence farming twice a year. The Lutheran church in Kenya is faced with many challenges, especially lack of formed and ordained pastors. Because many of our congregations are in rural villages, where many people are living below the bread line, pastors earn very little, and this scares any potential candidates who might be willing to go for pastoral training. When I had served as a pastor in my church for 10 years, an opportunity came across in 2015, and my church recommended me for a graduate program here [at Concordia Seminary] in St. Louis. My church body wants to have pastors with higher skill in different areas of concentrations in theology. Therefore, I am now concentrating on biblical studies. When I complete my Ph.D, I want to become one of the teachers at our seminary in Kenya. GSI is very beneficial, as it pays all my financials while I study at CSL. Without it, my studies might be in jeopardy. I hope to be a pastor with a strong understanding of the Lutheran faith in the exegetical field, able to strongly believe, teach, confess and defend the Christian faith in my church back in Kenya.”

— Rev. Jared Magera, GSI student at CSL
The LCMS Office of International Mission and the two LCMS seminaries weigh in on why GSI is so valuable as we strive to remain faithful to our Lord’s Great Commission.

**REV. LAWRENCE R. RAST JR.**
President, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

“Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), has been involved with and supported the Global Seminary Initiative (GSI) from its earliest, conceptual stages (2011). The conviction arose that bringing international students to our seminaries and sending our professors overseas would advance Christ’s Great Commission as we learned from rapidly growing churches and as our colleagues enhanced their understanding of confessional Lutheranism. GSI was, is and will continue to be a blessing to all of God’s people as we continue in Christ’s mission. While we in the U.S. are sometimes discouraged by an institutional church that appears in decline, that isn’t the case in the global south. Our church partners literally cannot keep up with the rapid growth of the church and are desperate for theological education. We have a waitlist for students interested in studying at CTSFW and are only able to fulfill a small fraction of the requests for our professors. The harvest is ripe. We must continue to raise up laborers for the harvest — both here and abroad.”

**REV. DANIEL J. MCMILLER**
Executive Director, LCMS Office of International Mission

“The goal of GSI is to provide the most gifted from these church bodies the opportunity to become better teachers in their home churches for the next generation. Each church needs good teachers. The tools for that aren’t easily acquired outside of our own seminaries. So we’re looking for those with good pastoral skills and academic ability to return and teach. We have to have pastors who are very well-equipped to stand for the truth — that’s even more profoundly needed in small, emerging church bodies in places where Lutheranism is totally unknown, where people in the name of the Gospel are teaching a lot of heresy. Christianity does exist in many places around the globe, but not with a clear teaching of sin and grace — rather, [teachers] teach wealth and health and temporal advancement, a prosperity gospel. So the challenges of our partner churches are tremendous, and they need good teachers from their own people who can communicate the truth better than even any missionary. Right now, the best place to teach these men is our own seminaries, without a doubt.”

**REV. DR. DALE A. MEYER**
President, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

“In partnership with Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, and the administration of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, helps raise awareness and funds for the formation of pastors and scholars who come to campus to study, with our faculty, the riches of Lutheranism so they, in turn, can share Gospel treasures with people in their native lands. Technology has brought us into a global village where we see, every day, the desperate need for the Prince of Peace. The Global Seminary Initiative is one important part of Concordia Seminary’s 21st-century mission on behalf of our Lord Jesus Christ. As my tenure as president winds down, I ponder the future of our seminary 20 or 30 years from now. I have no doubt that sharing the wealth of our Gospel-centered scholarship with people around the world will be an invigorating part of our future vitality as an institution of the LCMS. That’s why GSI is such a blessing and why we thank those who support this forward-looking mission.”