



# Inter-Lutheran Theological Seminary

914 Pine Street, PO Box 449, Hancock, MI 49930 • (906) 482-3337 • [www.ilseminary.org](http://www.ilseminary.org)  
a Minnesota Corporation

December 2025

Dear Friends,

*“But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. <sup>14</sup> And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.”*

**Luke 1:13-14**

*“And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. <sup>31</sup> And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.”*

**Luke 1:30-31**

*“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”*

**Luke 2:10-11**

One of the interesting things about the season of Advent is that the scripture readings in the church calendar often direct our attention to the birth of Jesus Christ. One might think that we should reserve those passages for the Christmas season itself, but this is not the case. The reason for this is simple. Advent is the season in which we prepare for the return of Jesus Christ, just as He promised. In our preparation for the second coming of Jesus Christ, we reflect on how God prepared His people for His first coming, with the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem.

There is a striking similarity in the angelic messages above. The angel greets Zechariah, Mary and the shepherds with the identical phrase **“Fear not.”** Of course there is good reason for this. Human beings are not accustomed to such angelic visits. Furthermore, the Jewish people were well aware that a divine encounter with a Holy God might very well mean death for sinful human beings. According to the book of Exodus, no one can see the face of God and live. Also, the Word of God repeatedly speaks of the importance of fearing God. However, the admonition to **“Fear God”** is not intended to instill terror of God, but rather a deep respect for Him.

The Gospel message teaches us how to have a reverence for God, while not being afraid of Him. The Good News of Jesus Christ is that God has come to deliver us from sin, death and the devil by sending His Son to the Cross to take upon Himself the punishment that we rightly deserved. In other words, Zechariah, Mary and the shepherds need not fear, because the angel has not come to bring bad news, but rather the greatest news of all. Their Messiah is coming!

God’s Word brings that same message to us. Our Saviour has come! Christ has accomplished His mission to “take away the sin of the world.” God now prepares us for the return of His Son, by reminding us of what Christ has done and encouraging us to be ready, not out of fear, but with longing and anticipation, as a bride awaits her bridegroom. In fact, we need not live in fear any longer, because God’s **“perfect love casteth out fear.” I John 4:18** As the hymn writer says:

“With hearts and hands uplifted,  
We plead, O Lord to see  
The day of earth’s redemption  
That brings us unto thee.”

Thank you for your continued support of the ministry of the seminary. God bless you and your families with a joyous Advent and Christmas season.

**“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Luke 2:14**

Yours in Christ,  
Chuck Bylkas



## *DONATIONS RECEIVED...*

***In memory of Joel Seppala***  
From Sheelah Seppala

***In memory of Edwin & Luella Bergstedt***  
From James & Kristin Erickson

***In memory of Arvid & Meredith Konu***  
From James & Kristin Erickson

## **\$ MATCHING FUNDS \$ PROGRAM ENDS DECEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup>**

Thank you to those who have contributed to the **MATCHING FUNDS PROGRAM!!** The program continues through December 15<sup>th</sup> so if possible, send in your contribution today and it will be matched up to \$25,000. Please earmark “matching funds” in the memo section of your check.

Our sincere thanks to the kind and generous donor who made this program possible. The seminary appreciates your continued support!



### **Looking forward to the Spring Semester...**

The Spring semester will begin on Monday, January 19, 2026. Daily classes will be History of the Ancient Church, Christian Dogmatics I, Old Testament Introduction, Pastoral Work & Administration, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians, and Greek Readings III. The Monday night class will be the Gospel of Luke. If you are interested in attending, please email [cilseminary@ilseminary.com](mailto:cilseminary@ilseminary.com) or call 906-482-3337.



***Wishing you a blessed Christmas  
and a joyous New Year!  
~ from the students and staff of the  
Inter-Lutheran Theological Seminary***



**ATTENTION SUPPORTERS:**  
**There are several ways to support the Seminary.**



**CHOICE DOLLARS DETAILS:** Eligible clients with membership can recommend where Thrivent distributes some of its charitable grant funds. These recommendations are shared by directing Choice Dollars to enrolled nonprofit organizations, including churches.

**Eligibility requirements:** To be eligible to direct Choice Dollars as part of Thrivent Choice®, you must be a client with benefit membership. Individual eligibility is also based on at least one of the following:

- Having \$750 or more in annual billed premiums of qualifying life and health insurance products.
- Having \$20,000 or more in contract value of qualifying life insurance and annuity products.

Eligibility is determined monthly and reevaluated on an annual basis.

**Minimum and maximum Choice Dollars designations:** Eligible clients will be designated a minimum of 25 Choice Dollars and a maximum of 5,000 Choice Dollars per eligibility period (Jan. 1 to Dec. 31).

**Choice Dollars expiration date:** Choice Dollars designated during the calendar year can be directed until March 31 of the following year.

For more information about Choice Dollars, visit <http://www.Thrivent.com/thriventchoice> or call 800-847-4836 or contact your local Thrivent Financial representative.

## **THRIVENT CHARITABLE IMPACT & INVESTING™**

The Inter-Lutheran Seminary has established an Endowment Fund through Thrivent Charitable Impact & Investing.™ All earnings of the endowment will be used for the seminary's needs thereby ensuring the continued existence of this funding source. This is the preferred method used by many non-profit entities, especially ongoing religiously focused organizations such as seminaries. To learn more about this organization, go to [www.thriventcharitable.com](http://www.thriventcharitable.com).

We would love to grow our endowment into a major source of ongoing seminary support. Although the seminary still needs the financial ongoing regular contributions of our supporters, please consider the endowment fund for your planned giving needs. For more additional information, please contact Kirk Otto, Jr. at (715) 821-8574 or Cheryl Hendrickson at (906) 482-3337.

## **ANOTHER OPTION FOR GIVING – PayPal**

Online giving is as easy as clicking the DONATE button on our website: <https://ilseminary.org>. Simply go to the *How to Contribute* tab and tap the yellow *DONATE* button to begin. There are options for credit and debit card donations and even the option to help the seminary cover the PayPal processing fee. (Note we are charged 1.99% + \$.49/transaction fee). As always, we are thankful for your continued support!