



2019 SYNODICAL REPORT

Firmly rooted in its Lutheran heritage, Wittenberg University continues to embrace its mission and values as it challenges students to become responsible global citizens, to discover their callings, and to lead personal, professional, and civic lives of creativity, service, compassion, and integrity. This past year proved an exceptional reflection of the university's mission in action.

Believing that students learn more about themselves when they give of themselves, several students spent Spring Break assisting those in need in Alabama and engaging in disaster relief efforts in Lee County following an EF-4 tornado's aftermath. As one student participant said, "It was a very unpredictable week, but it was an amazing experience that I will always remember. Wittenberg's motto is 'Having Light We Pass It On To Others,' and we did just that with our time in Alabama. To learn that your work means so much to someone else made me understand the value that comes from helping others, and that simply lending a helping hand is one of the easiest things you can do to make a difference in the world. I am so grateful I was able to go on the Fuller Center for Housing immersion trip, and I highly recommend it to everyone so we can all make a difference – one act of kindness at a time."

Additionally, Wittenberg's commitment to global citizenship was highly visible this year as development efforts for a new study-abroad program in Capetown, South Africa, took shape. A number of students also participated in two of the university's most popular international immersion programs in Costa Rica and in our sister city of Wittenberg, Germany.

Closer to home, Wittenberg celebrated the 25th anniversary of its Empty Bowls fundraiser, proceeds from which benefit the Second Harvest Food Bank. This year, a record-setting amount of \$50,187 was raised, which equates to 250,935 meals. In addition, a Campus Cupboard was created, which provides students with free emergency food and hygiene items during the week. Faculty and staff have enthusiastically embraced this effort to alleviate food insecurity through donations and education, while students are increasingly utilizing the cupboard's offerings and sharing the news about its ministry.

Moreover, the Office of the Pastor has led and coordinated an effort that will allow Wittenberg to host its first-ever Discipleship Dive. Scheduled for June 2020, the event will involve a week of service, advocacy, and leadership learning for Lutheran youth. As part of the week, youth will serve together each day in sites throughout Springfield before breaking into their chosen Deeper Dive groups (Service Squared, Arts and Culture, Environment and Sustainability, Recreation and Play), all while learning to become faithful leaders and advocates – disciples of Jesus – within each cause.

This year also found the campus community welcoming Ronald Rittgers, author, theologian and the Erich Markel Chair in German Reformation Studies at Valparaiso University, for the annual Wittenberg Series-sponsored Rev. Dr. Kenneth H. Sauer Symposium. Additionally, the campus celebrated the approval and start of a four-year, in-house undergraduate nursing program.

Lastly, construction of Wittenberg's new 135,000-square-foot Health, Wellness & Athletics complex is nearly complete with all facilities set to be fully open and operational by Homecoming, Oct. 24-27, 2019. Wittenberg invites all members of the synod – both clergy and lay persons – to experience this game-changing facility, and, as always, all are welcomed to attend worship services, athletic contests, and Wittenberg Series cultural events.