



## Clarified vision

By Bishop Wayne N. Miller

*Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah ... and the Lord showed him the whole land ... (Deuteronomy 34:1).*

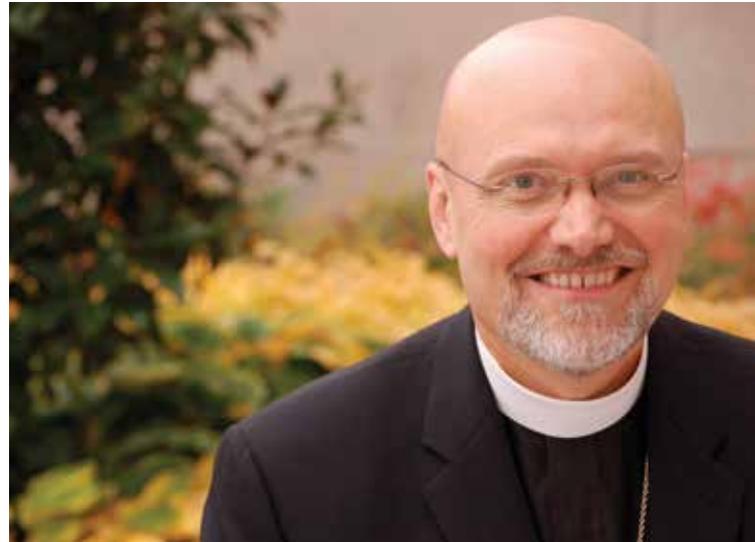
Almost exactly 12 years ago as I was preparing my farewell sermon—as pastor of St. Mark Lutheran, Aurora, just before assuming the office of bishop—I had written an article similar to this one for the church newsletter. While we were running copies of the newsletter, something went wrong with the copy machine. As more and more copies ran, both my photograph and my words began to get lighter and lighter with each copy until I was about to disappear altogether.

I doubt very much that this technical problem will recur with a *Living Lutheran* supplement, but that memory does capture the way I am feeling in these final days as I transition into retirement from the bishop's office. In both my work in the office and in my work in congregations, now there is this inescapable sensation of being one of Gen. Douglas MacArthur's famous old soldiers who just fades away ....

This, I suspect, was precisely the way Moses felt as he responded to God's call to separate himself from the people whose lives had become so completely entwined with his own—as he slowly, slowly faded from view in his long last climb to the mountaintop.

And yet, it is just as true that for Moses way up there on Mount Nebo, perched on the pinnacle of Pisgah, there was a new clarity of vision. He could also see at last where it had come from and where it was all going. And even though he could not go into the new land with them, the clarity that he gained by separating himself for a while in order to see a bigger picture and a more distant horizon ... the clarity was enough to allow him to be at peace.

It is always a bit risky for leaders to identify too closely with great people of faith like Moses, but I must admit that I relate to the story of his last climb.



Bishop Wayne N. Miller

And even though I may not have made it all the way to the top of the mountain, I have been graced to arrive at a place where I can see a little more clearly what might not always be visible when one is still on the road with the other pilgrims.

So, as I prepare to pass on the synod's pectoral cross, which you have so graciously entrusted to my stewardship for the last 12 years, from this high plateau I've seen it now, and I can't unsee it. Because of your passion and generosity and commitment, I have seen with my own eyes what the church can be ... what the church will be ... what the church must be. Because of the goodness and strength, the resilience and zeal for love and justice displayed by the people and congregations that make up this Metropolitan Chicago Synod, I see now with complete clarity that no matter what other separations we may face along the way, neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And that is enough, I think, to allow us to journey on with peace, joy and confidence in our hearts. ✠

## LSSI to honor Drauts with True Friend Award



Eric (center) and Jody Draut will be recognized Oct. 12 with the True Friend Award from Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI). In 2016 they received the Spirit of Giving Award from the Association of Lutheran Development Executives from David Novak, LSSI vice president of advancement.

Behind every strong Lutheran organization or church is a cadre of committed volunteers who invest their time and treasure. Eric and Jodie Draut of Arlington Heights are two such individuals. They will be honored with the True Friend Award by Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) at its 38th Amicus Certus Celebration on Oct. 12.

LSSI gives the award annually to “individuals or organizations that have made significant contributions to the human community.” For the Drauts, this includes Lutheran organizations across Chicagoland as well as their church, Our Saviour’s Lutheran in Arlington Heights.

“We have been truly blessed in life,” Jodie said. “It is important to give back to others using our time and talents.”

Eric added, “We concentrate our volunteer efforts on supporting the ministries of both our home church and the ministries of the greater church. We both find great joy in answering God’s call.”

Eric has served on the LSSI Board of Directors since 2006, including chairman from 2008-2010, 2012-

2013 and 2014-2017. He served as executive chairman from 2013-2014, and then as emeritus chairman from 2017-2018. In recognition of his volunteer service at LSSI and other efforts, he was nominated by the LSSI staff and received the President of the United States’ Council on Service and Civic Participation Call to Service Award. He has also served on the Holy Family Ministries Board of Directors since 2015 and was interim chief executive officer from 2017-2018.

Jodie, an attorney, is a member of Our Saviour’s POWER (Policy beyond Our Walls: Education and Response) committee whose members recently participated in Lutheran Day. She has helped run the annual book fair at Holy Family Ministries’ school for over 10 years, and once served on the Statewide Advisory Council of Lutheran Advocacy—Illinois. They also are members of LSSI’s Cornerstone Society.

The Drauts have had the opportunity to see firsthand the impact of LSSI’s work, as well as meeting

### Vargas to deliver keynote for LSSI

Elizabeth Vargas, lead investigative reporter for A&E Networks and former *20/20* anchor, will be the keynote speaker at LSSI’s 38th Amicus Certus (True Friend) Celebration on Oct. 12 at the Union League Club of Chicago.



Elizabeth Vargas

As an award-winning anchor and correspondent, Vargas has traveled the world covering breaking news stories, reporting in-depth investigations and conducting newsmaker interviews. *The New York Times* has praised her for “intellectually brave” reporting.

In September 2016, Vargas’ book *Between Breaths: A Memoir of Panic and Addiction* was released by Grand Central Publishing. The book details her struggles with anxiety and alcohol, and tells a powerful story of healing and coping.

**For more information** about LSSI’s Amicus Certus Celebration, including reservations, contact Mariah Heinz at 847-635-4656 or [mariah.heinz@lssi.org](mailto:mariah.heinz@lssi.org).

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staff responsible for providing services. Those experiences have been the inspiration for both their volunteer time and charitable contributions.

Some of the programs that have been important to the Drauts have been Project IMPACT, which LSSI created at Swedish Covenant Hospital and is now in five hospitals on the North Side. The program embeds mental health professionals in hospital emergency rooms to provide appropriate services such as counseling or drug treatment. “LSSI is truly on the front lines helping clients who are in crisis,” Eric said.

The Drauts also are drawn to LSSI’s Prisoner and Family Ministry Storybook Project, whereby volun-

teers record a parent who is incarcerated reading a story to their child. The book and recording are then sent to the child. “Keeping children connected with incarcerated parents is so important, and Project Storybook is a great way to do that,” Jodie explained.

“Eric and Jodie have a deep commitment to LSSI’s mission and a willingness to serve in any way,” said Mark Stutrud, LSSI president and CEO. “We have witnessed firsthand the impact of their leadership, their generosity, and their support of our programs.”

Eric said, “Simply put, LSSI is Christ in a broken world. There is no better example of ‘God’s work. Our hands.’ than the work done at LSSI.” ☞

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## LSTC invites you to “go deeper” by taking a class

If you waded into the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago’s (LSTC) online and print communications these days, you’ll likely see an invitation to “Go deeper. Go further. Go beyond.” But that’s not just for students. It could be for you.

Beginning in the fall, LSTC is inviting those beyond the school doors to take classes at a drastically reduced rate. Normally, one course costs roughly \$1,900. Now, non-degree students may take any class (up to four) for \$300 per class, either for credit or by audit. Classes taken for credit would count toward an eventual degree.

This offer is for those who may be considering seminary or who just want to learn more—for pastors, church professionals, and leaders of congregations and organizations. These 12-week classes begin Sept. 3.

Scott Chalmers, dean of student services at LSTC, explains how this new approach came to be: “LSTC is a resource for the entire synod and the entire Chicago area. Our classrooms are open for commuters, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran, who want to deepen their understanding of their faith. Our enrolled students will greatly benefit from

these voices in the classroom. We talk regularly about the need for building community, and we want that community to spill out of our building and into the wider church.”

Classes include “Jesus the Healer: Restoring the Body, Community and Earth in New Testament and Early Christian Perspectives”; “Love and Enemies: U.S. Christian Racial Reconciliation”; “From Genesis to Revelation: Bible Survey”; “Leadership for Vital Congregations/Vital Communities; and “Leadership in Christian and Muslim Communities.”

An extensive list of courses is available at [lstc.edu](http://lstc.edu).

LSTC hopes to find people who are ready to go deeper into Scripture, go further in ministry, and go beyond their comfort zone into new ways to engage their community, Chalmers said. In the seminary’s diverse community, people throughout the synod will be able to gain new insights and energy, maybe even a new direction for ministry, he added.

To enroll as a special non-degree student at the rate of \$300 per course, contact Chalmers at [schalmers@lstc.edu](mailto:schalmers@lstc.edu) or 773-256-0685. ☞

## Creating room at the inn

By Doug Kenshol

On Christmas Eve, volunteers from Faith Lutheran Church in Homewood opened a new emergency shelter, enabling homeless men to escape from the cold.

The original plan was to start sometime in January. But Tom Dockweiler and Todd Thoresen got to talking over beers: It wasn't right. People experiencing homelessness should have a place to sleep, especially on Christmas. After all, thousands of years ago, Mary and Joseph were homeless. They had no place to go. No one would offer up their home or a room for a pregnant woman. No one, that is, except one unnamed innkeeper who graciously provided shelter in a stable.

Dockweiler and Thoresen brought their thoughts to Faith's outreach and hospitality team, commandeering its agenda for half an hour. Lee Brauer came forward to say she'd organize the Christmas Eve dinner. Kim Kurtz said she'd take care of breakfast. Word spread rapidly, and by Sunday many congregation members had signed on to help.

So on Christmas Eve, Faith opened its doors to allow homeless men to sleep on pads, 5-inch thick mattresses, on the floor of the fellowship hall. Volunteers staffed the shelter and provided free dinner, breakfast and sack lunches to the guests.

The shelter now operates every Monday night and is part of a network of 14 churches, including Zion Lutheran in Tinley Park and Redeemer Lutheran in Oak Forest, that participate in the South Suburban PADS emergency shelter network serving the southern portion of suburban Cook County.

South Suburban PADS is an interfaith movement that is working to prevent and end homelessness in the south suburbs of Chicago. Over the past 28 years, the organization and participating congregations have provided shelter and meals to enable more than 17,000 people to survive homelessness.

These efforts save lives, but they are not enough. No one should freeze outside. And no one should



Christmas Eve Meal Team (above) at Faith Lutheran Church, Homewood. Confirmation students prepare dinner.



ever be forced to sleep on a church basement floor. We need shelters and are grateful to the volunteers and church hosts, but we must do more.

The mission of South Suburban PADS is to not just help people to survive homelessness. The goal is to help every person who experiences homelessness find a pathway back. In addition to shelter, it provides an array of affordable housing opportunities and supportive services that enable over 500 people per year to escape homelessness and work to achieve greater financial independence.

Similar organizations are supported by ELCA congregations throughout the metropolitan Chicago region and throughout northern Illinois. Collectively, these volunteer-based shelters save thousands of lives. But we can't sustain the work without the collective support of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, ELCA World Hunger, and thousands of individual donors and volunteers.

Please help sustain God's work. To help, you can:

- Volunteer or donate through the South Suburban PADS website ([sspads.org](http://sspads.org)) or the websites of peer organizations throughout the region.
- Advocate with ELCA World Hunger ([elca.org/hunger](http://elca.org/hunger)) and similar agencies to support food pantries and homeless shelters in the Chicago region.

With your help, we can create pathways home for thousands of people. ♣

**Doug Kenshol** is executive director of South Suburban PADS.