

Hello Good Shepherd, Greetings from Wartburg Seminary and the Wicks family!

We hope Advent season was a time of blessed anticipation and that Christmas was full of joy for you all. It certainly was here at Wartburg. We had many opportunities to sing carols and celebrate with the community here, although we did miss the grandeur and beauty of Christmas at Luther. We will have to plan ahead for next year as that tradition is certainly one we want to continue.

Life at Wartburg has been full as we have begun to settle into the rhythm of study, worship, and community. Nathan has enjoyed getting back into life as a student, having enjoyed the Greek intensive class during the summer and the theology, history, missions, and scripture classes during the fall. Many professors are challenging and creating fruitful thinking space among the class as the conversation with each other nurtures growth and understanding. We all have enjoyed the daily chapel services and the centering influence it has on the community as the beating heart from which we branch out into our studies, homes, and other aspects of the seminary life.

Nathan is spending his J-term in Texas for three weeks learning about the culture of the borderlands and how the church is serving in this place where worlds collide, which hits pretty close to home even in Iowa. He will visit the border and learn some of the history of its creation and the impetus for the waves of immigration happening today in spite of the difficulties that must be endured in the journey and within the U.S for the people who do make it. He is excited to learn how the church can be an agent of healing in the midst of the tension and suffering experienced around this issue and to deepen his theological understanding of Latino culture to find points of confluence with Lutheran teaching where real change can take place as people on both sides of the border recognize common ground and a deep need for each other.

Sarah and Karl have become integral parts of the community at Wartburg as well. Karl fit right in with the gaggle of kids running around and loves the sandbox, playground, and bike riding space right outside our front door. Sarah has continued her online Masters of Social Work program while also providing daycare for some of the children of other seminary students. She is currently completing an internship at Project Concern, a non-profit in Dubuque that provides services for the homeless, and is enjoying the good work and learning that is happening there. She has also found many friendships and support from students, spouses, and faculty in the Wartburg community and has loved being here. In fact, she has discovered a deepening sense of her own calling by being in this place and she is going to be entering a program of study towards becoming a Diakonal Minister, a ministry that specifically seeks to connect the Word of the Gospel with justice and service for the sake of the world. She has become close with others who have gone this route and was inspired by their example and is seeking the complement this will give to her sense of call to Social Work.

Life is full and exciting here and we are grateful for all the prayers and support you have given us. Know that you are in our thoughts and prayers as well, and that we thank God for your ministry in Decorah and the faithful, life giving ways you are living out your calling in that place.

In Christ,

Nathan, Sarah, and Karl Wicks