

Dear *Sara Witte and the Council of Lutheran Women*

I pray that this letter finds you well and blessed! My name is Chris Sturges and I am one of the Second Year seminary students that you support here at the seminary. I first wanted to apologize for how close these letters are coming. The first letter has been written out for a while, but due to some extenuating circumstances and my own forgetfulness, I have forgotten to send it. I'm very sorry, but wanted you to know how much your support means to me in this letter. Being a second-year seminary student can be incredibly difficult: between the increased workload in classes, extra work at our field work, and overall exhaustion from being in such difficult classes, a lot of the students who drop out of the seminary end up doing so in this time. As painful as it is to admit it, this past semester was probably the toughest of school I've ever had, and the spiritual warfare placed upon myself and my roommates was immense.

Overall, I was having a pretty rough semester and I remember that I had actually just gotten out of quarantine as I had contracted COVID. With loads of schoolwork, extra exams, and makeup work to try and consider, I was feeling a bit overwhelmed and defeated. That was when I received your gracious Christmas card wishing me a Merry Christmas, and I was floored and reminded of the support I have in the Church. It's amazing how God can work through one small Christmas card to remind me that I am not alone in the work that I'm doing, but wonderful people like you are here supporting me even when times get tough. That card brought a bright spot to my day and helped to remind me of the whole support system I have both financially and spiritually that are cheering me on even when I cannot see it. I currently have that card in my room as a continued reminder of the support I have.

Thank you so much for your support that you have given to me. Your grace and support even when I forget to send thank you cards is overwhelming and I appreciate all that you do. I'm continually keeping you all in my prayers and will continue to press on in this semester towards vicarage and learning as much as I can for my future pastoral ministry. Without support like yours, I could not be here in pursuit of God's calling for my life. Thank you so much and please let me know if there is anything specific I can pray about by emailing me at sturgesc@csf.edu or writing me back. God's blessings in 2022!

In Christ,

Chris Sturges

Genesis 32:9-10