

## Why Wartburg?

Ray McKechnie (M.Div. Senior)

Ray McKechnie is a native of Alaska and in his final year of the Master of Divinity program at Wartburg Seminary. He will graduate this May. Reflecting back on his decision to come to WTS, Ray says, "I don't think I chose Wartburg. Wartburg really chose me." He had known a lot of Wartburg students who spoke highly of Wartburg as a place of engaged learning within a formative community. This concept resonated with him. Still, he had been prepared to go to a different seminary, but after a little wrestling with God, decided in the end on WTS. Being in Alaska at the time, he had to make his decision sight unseen. He confirms, "I think I chose wisely. Wartburg has proven to be a great fit for me."

Ray appreciates the "head-knowledge" he has gained at Wartburg, but is most grateful for the "heart-knowledge" that is experienced as a result of living in an intentional faith community. "It hasn't always been easy," he acknowledges, "Sometimes it has been painful. But that's the reality of the church in a nutshell." Ray shares a personal story of the best of Wartburg's life together: "My dad passed away quite suddenly at the beginning of last semester. I had to drop everything and fly back to Alaska to help my mother make the funeral arrangements, settle all dad's accounts, and all the other paperwork that goes along with death. The rest of the semester, there were times when I wondered if I would be able to pull it together as I played catch-up with my numerous assignments. Every step of the way I was challenged, encouraged, and prayed for by the faculty and my peers. I wouldn't have made it without their support."

Ray also believes that Wartburg is incredibly important in the life of the church, because although any seminary is going to provide someone with a good education, WTS, he says, "is just... different. I think because Wartburg is the product of mission efforts, God's mission remains the strong undercurrent in the flow of our life together. We are always reminded that mission is at the heart of who we are and what God calls us to do as God's church. We are challenged and encouraged as future servant-leaders to think critically and creatively, to see with renewed eyes where God's Spirit is present in the world around and to call attention to that movement. More than ever, the church needs leaders to continually engage the church in its missional identity in our rapidly changing world, proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ in ever changing contexts." Ray adds, "I know I have more learning and growth to do--we never fully 'arrive'--but I feel confident as a servant-leader and in where the Lord calls me to go."