



UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE TWIN CITIES

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NEWSLETTER

November 2011

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Dear Friends in the United Community,

In this part of the country, fall is a season of transition, a time of moving from the fullness and flourishing of summer to the rest and reflection of winter. Each year we move with the changing of the seasons in small ways, harvesting the last of the tomatoes, preparing gardens for snow, clearing furniture off decks, and pulling docks from the lakes. This fall at United, we are moving through a season of transition due to the retirement of President Mary McNamara. We began this season welcoming new students, installing Dean Sue Ebbers and Assistant Dean Sharon Tan at Convocation, and also saying farewell and thank you to Mary for her effective leadership at United.

The shifts in this season include Dean Sue Ebbers serving as officer in charge. As chair of the board, I meet with senior staff members regularly and am heading up the search for a new president. Our trustees are giving time and talent in a multitude of ways.

The fruits in this season are plentiful, and I want to share a few of them with you. An enthusiastic group of new students arrived and they are taking more classes, increasing our FTE's by five. The admissions staff is communicating online and in face-to-face meetings with prospective students and strategizing ways to promote the masters of arts degree program. Our development staff with the guidance of Trustee Linda Mack is creating a new marketing position and marketing plans to promote the programs of the seminary.

Through our partnership with the Guthrie Theater more than 100 people stayed for a theological discussion following a performance of Seamus Heaney's *The Burial at Thebes*, moderated by Trustee Rev. Jim Gertmenian.

We are pleased to announce the achievements of our faculty: Preaching Professor Chris Smith was one of five preachers in the "Outstanding Preachers Series" in Washington, D.C., this summer; Constructive Theology Professor Eleazar Fernandez has been awarded a grant from the Association for Theological Schools for his paper, "Christian Hospitality in a World of Many Faiths;" and Historical Theology Professor Paul Capetz has been appointed to serve on the American Academy of Religion Steering Committee for Theological Education.

The search for a new president has begun. The Search Committee, made up of trustees, faculty, students, and staff, is receiving resumes. Please send me the names of people you recommend as candidates for the president of United, the ecumenical, progressive seminary of the Upper Midwest. Thank you for the ways you support the mission of the seminary.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Hendrixson

50 Years: Changing Lives to Change the World

Did you know that United's original campus consisted of 63 acres with an adjacent pig farm and was developed before the 694 freeway existed? This interesting facet of United's history and others will be part of the unraveling story of United's 50 years of leadership in social justice, racial and gender equality, and religion and the arts. You will hear about the seminary's period roots and formation, cutting edges, accomplishments, and promising future on our Web site, Facebook, in print, video, and other forms of communication.

Plans for the anniversary are being guided by the committee's energetic chair, Belle Scott, a former United trustee and active member of Mayflower Church and the United Church of Christ (UCC). Belle describes the committee, comprised of alums, trustees, faculty, staff, students, and emeriti faculty, as "one of the most enthusiastic, engaged, and creative groups I've worked with."

Anniversary events will highlight United's distinctive programs in religion and the arts, justice and peace, and leadership in the church and society. 'Don't miss' events in 2011 are "Acts of Protest" through music and art on 11-11-11, and Geoffrey Black, general minister and president of the UCC, who will speak on "The Future of the Church" on November 18. A sample of other events/activities include an all-class reunion and alum art exhibit during Spring Convocation, April 25-26; a series of theological book clubs beginning December 6; and a prayer initiative that reflects gratitude for United's history and renewed enthusiasm for its future. We hope you will join us in celebrating United's spirit-filled history of changing lives to change the world now and throughout 2012.



Belle Scott



My Early Call to Ministry



I'm Sonja Parr, a student in the Master of Divinity Program in my final year. My journey to seminary began at the young age of 12 when the minister of my home church in Owatonna, Minn., told me I had a call to ministry.

After receiving my undergraduate degree in religious studies from the University of Wisconsin, I served as the youth and young adult minister at First United Methodist Church (UMC) in Madison. My UMC supervisor, a phenomenal mentor, along with a United alum, affirmed my call and advised me to enroll at United Theological Seminary.

Although I explored two other seminaries, I chose United because its ethos felt inclusive, cutting edge, and dialogical—and because I am a passionate ally of LGBT issues in the church.

United's focus on peace and justice has challenged and enriched my journey of activism and advocacy. The curriculum and professors, especially Carolyn Pressler, professor of Old Testament, and my former advisor and dean, Richard Weis, have been key to my formation.

Following graduation in May 2012, I plan to be an ordained elder in the UMC and a minister in a parish setting. I'm passionate about education from the pulpit as a facilitator of dialogue. My priorities will be to listen to the hearts of all members, empower laity, and advocate with marginalized members of the larger community.

The Annual Fund 2011-2012 Changing Lives to Change the World

For the last 50 years, United Theological Seminary's progressive vision and commitment to ecumenical theological education has attracted and engaged a diverse spectrum of students who have become distinctive leaders in the church and the world. Today and throughout our history, generous donors to the Annual Fund have made this possible. This is an important time in the life of United when strong financial support is essential in order for it to thrive. Help celebrate United's 50 years as an innovative leader and prophetic voice in theological education by contributing to United's Annual Fund this year.

A Unique Giving Opportunity - November 14-18!

Several United Trustees have created a special \$15,000 matching fund as incentive for online gifts made November 14-18, 2011. To make a gift, visit www.unitedseminary.edu and click giveMN.org.

Thank you very much!

Congregational Partner: First Baptist Church

First Baptist Church in St. Paul was the first Baptist church in the Minnesota Territory. Incorporated in 1849, this community of disciples has long been a creative one. Current pastor Bill Englund is a United alum and the longest serving minister in First Baptist's history. During his tenure, the congregation's response to significant changes in its St. Paul neighborhood has transformed First Baptist's mission and membership. It has become a birthplace for innovative social justice ministries.

Welcoming Refugees

First Baptist has served the Karen immigrant community for more than 10 years. A Karen associate pastor offers weekly services in Karen and Burmese, and Sunday School is held in both English and Karen, with combined youth activities. Beginning Karen language classes are offered weekly, along with a citizenship class, sewing classes, resettlement support, and welcome baskets for new families. First Baptist housed the first Karen nonprofit organization in the country, provided space for a national convention of Karen immigrants, and birthed two new Karen churches.

Blank Slate Theatre

The brainchild of Bethel graduate Adam Arnold, Blank Slate engages teens in creating and performing "therapeutic theater." One recent show focused on the theme of autism: a mother of an autistic son wrote the play; her autistic son played the lead. The theater also produced the Karen Project, working with Karen elders to craft a story about coming to this country and adapting to a new culture.

Family Place

The Family Place—founded by United alum Margaret Lovejoy and housed at First Baptist—is a day center for families who lack permanent housing. Families are served three meals a day and offered on-site medical and dental care. There are support resources for parents and well-maintained play areas for young children. School-aged children are bused from the church to school to provide stability while their families look for housing.

The ministries of First Baptist testify to the power of a shared vision and committed discipleship.



Pastor Bill

Trustees Step Up and Offer Their Services as Needs Arise

When members of United's Board of Trustees see a need, they step up and offer their services. Recently, the board decided to hire a communications manager to oversee an overall strategy to get the word out about the life-changing theological education offered by United.

Realizing the above process could take some time, Trustee Linda Mack saw an immediate need for a communications manager at the onset of United's 50th anniversary year. She said, "This is an especially opportune time to consistently, clearly, and effectively communicate United's major strengths in social justice, religion and the arts, and preparing leaders for the new church."

Linda noted that Board Chair Carolyn Hendrixson set the example by stepping up as co-leader with Dean Sue Ebbers, the officer in charge at United. Inspired by Carolyn, Linda volunteered as interim marketing director. At this writing, she was crafting a press release about United's 50th anniversary, and she's been working with Cindi Beth Johnson, director of community programming in the arts, religion and spirituality, and Renee Flesner, marketing coordinator, to publicize upcoming events.

Architecture critic for the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* for 21 years, Linda brings to her volunteer position professional writing skills, her upbringing as the child of a Methodist minister, seven years' service on the board of trustees, and long-time ties to United. Those ties began in the '90s when Linda and her husband Warren, a Minneapolis attorney, met Wilson Yates, then a professor and president of the seminary. At Wilson's invitation, Linda served on both the architect selection and the building committees for United's new chapel. She describes Bigelow Chapel as "a marvelous representation of the warm spirituality at United."

In addition to her impassioned support of United, Linda writes about architecture and urban design for national publications, and she's writing a book about the summer houses of Lake Superior's Madeline Island, where she and Warren own a summer place.



From Our Historical Roots

Yankton College Alum Attends United's Fall Convocation

Ed Zuern, a 1955 alum of the School of Theology of Yankton College, and his wife Louise attended United's fall convocation and were present when the time capsule was opened to commemorate the school's 50th year. Speaking by phone from Bismarck, N.D., Ed mentioned spending a couple of hours poring over material from the capsule that related to Yankton.



Ed Zuern-Yankton School of Theology-1955

Fifty-six years after graduating from Yankton School of Theology, you can hear in Ed's voice his affection for his alma mater. He describes Yankton College as a unique place where he received an excellent education. Although the student body numbered about 350, it included students from Austria, Germany, Greece, and Samoa.

After Ed earned his bachelor of theology degree, he spent a year at Germany's Heidelberg University. Later on he obtained a master of arts degree in sociology from the University of Montana and his juris doctor degree from the law school at the University of North Dakota (UND), where he met Louise.

Ed's career zigzagged a few times. Although he did not pursue ordained ministry, his facility with the German language made him an asset to German-speaking

Congregational churches, and he served as a licensed minister in Missoula, Mont., for five and a half years. He later taught sociology and business law at the Williston branch of UND. Following his stint as a teacher, Ed became assistant attorney general of N.D., a position he held until his retirement. Post-retirement, Ed served as a licensed interim minister at five churches in N.D. and two in Hawaii.

Ed and Louise were long-time friends of the late Bob Strobel, a Yankton alum and founding faculty member at United, and his wife Alice, the school's founding registrar. During their recent visit to the Twin Cities, Ed and Louise stayed at Alice's home, and she accompanied them to convocation.

Mission House Alum: "Some of the best years of my life."

Roger Wentz was majoring in mechanical engineering at University of Wisconsin-Madison when he experienced a call to ministry. He then transferred as a sophomore to Mission House College near Sheboygan, Wis., where he met Frances, his wife of 55 years.

After earning a bachelor of arts degree in history in 1953, he went straight on to complete Mission House Theological Seminary's three-year bachelor of divinity program. Twelve of the 15 members of his theology class also attended Mission House College with a total enrollment of 150. His class was the last to complete all three years of the theology program at Mission House prior to its merger with the Yankton School of Theology to become United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities.

Roger speaks highly of the education he received at the seminary, and he praised a faculty that included Professor Louis H. Gunnemann, who later served as dean.

Originally ordained in the Evangelical and Reformed Church, Roger became a minister in the newly merged United Church of Christ. In a ministry that spanned 39 years, he first served as associate pastor at Faith Church in Milwaukee. He then served as solo pastor of large congregations in Kaukauna, Wis., (10 years) and in Sauk City, Wis. (19 years). He last served in Canton, Ill. (7 years). Roger also served the church in a variety of conference, association, and ecumenical positions.

Now retired, Roger and his wife Frances reside outside of Black River Falls, Wis., near the Indian Mission. The couple has visited United on occasion over the years and enjoys a monthly get together with Roger's fellow alums and their spouses. Roger said, "I often look upon my years in seminary as some of the best years of my life."



Roger Wentz-Mission House Theological Seminary-1956

A Circuitous Journey to Seminary



I'm Anthony Jermaine Ross, a student in the Master of Divinity Program and a member of the Presbyterian Church (USA). My journey to United was circuitous. I grew up in Texas where my father was a Seventh Day Adventist preacher; my thoughts on religious were shaped by my father, who always felt a commitment to others.

Following college, I taught classes in the Bible and English in South Korea for a couple years. I then joined a church in Texas where the minister encouraged me to try seminary. After two years at Houston Graduate School of Theology, I transferred to United to balance out my conservative roots. I was impressed with United's use of context and how it related to contemporary society.

Now in my final year, I am grateful for the amazing relationships I've developed with my professors. During a global immersion trip to the Philippines with Eleazar Fernandez, professor of constructive theology, I became excited about parish ministry and social justice. My teachers have gone beyond the classroom, initiating transformative dialogue with me. Paul Capetz, professor of historical theology, was a wonderful mentor and helped me understand church history in a deeper way.

Following graduation, I plan to seek parish ministry and eventually earn a Ph.D. in contemporary theology and American public life.

Barbara Anne Keely to be Installed November 17, 11:35 AM Bigelow Chapel

Dr. Barbara Anne Keely, associate professor of life and leadership of the congregation, will be installed to the Schilling Chair for the Church and Economic Life on November 17. Initially Dr. Keely had some regrets about losing courses she had painstakingly developed and "Christian Education" as part of her title, though she still teaches in that area. Through prayer and discernment she quickly recognized how much in her life had prepared her for this new focus. Her heart has always been with the parish, and her new teaching responsibilities have already provided great satisfaction as students just beginning parish internships report their self-discoveries. We celebrate Dr. Keely's gifts for this new chapter in her career.

“Acts of Protest: Changing the World through Art”

Twin Cities artists and musicians raise their voices to celebrate United Theological Seminary’s half-century fight for social justice

Since the days of Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie, and Woodstock, protest songs and art have fueled the fight for peace and social justice. On Friday, November 11, Twin Cities songwriter Leslie Ball and friends Kevin Kling, Simone Perrin, Denise Dunbar-Perkins, and Neal Hagberg will raise the roof with stories and songs of social justice from the last five decades. The rousing evening celebrates the 50th anniversary of United, the Upper Midwest’s leading progressive seminary.

Distinguished visual artists will lend their voices to the evening. Sculptor Harriet Bart, painter and muralist Ta-coumba Aiken, photographers Laura Crosby and Camille Gage, print makers John August Swanson and Diane Eicher, ceramicist Anna Metcalfe, graffiti artist Chaka Mkali, and fiber artist Karen Searle chose works that comment on the need for social change for the exhibit “Seeing the Common Good: Artists Creating for Social Change.” Opening at 6:30 PM, the free exhibit will be on display through December 2.

“Protest Songs: Changing the World through Music” begins at 7:30 PM in the seminary’s award-winning Bigelow Chapel. Master narrator Kevin Kling will share stories of his own 50 years, and Ball and friends will offer songs of protest and proclamation. Come prepared to sing along! Reservations are required. Call 651.255.6138.

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DEEPENING FAITH.

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United Theological Seminary is an ecumenical seminary
of the United Church of Christ.



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