

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE TWIN CITIES FALL 2021

VOICES



Rev. Dr. Jessica Chapman Lape, the newly installed assistant professor and program director for interreligious chaplaincy, offers the benediction at Fall Convocation. Read more about the ceremony and Rev. Dr. Chapman Lape in this issue of VOICES. Photo credit: Don Breneman



Rev. Dr. Molly T. Marshall

"It is a season of renewal,
and I am delighted with the
seminary's progress ..."

MESSAGE FROM THE INTERIM PRESIDENT REV. DR. MOLLY T. MARSHALL

Dear Faithful Friends of United,

It is a season of renewal at United, and I am delighted with the seminary's progress in key areas: enrollment, financial stability, advancement, a new endowed faculty chair, new faculty, and board engagement. It is the beginning of a new academic year, and it is brimming with possibilities and promise. Thoughtful professors will ply their craft of teaching; eager students will give themselves to the intellectual and spiritual formation that theological education beckons. The whiff of new books entices, and the energy of the classroom crackles. It is my favorite time of year!

The life of the seminary relies on faithful friends who give, who refer students, and who pray for the well-being of the school. We could not pursue our mission of educating innovative and compassionate leaders for churches and the larger community without your regular investment of financial resources.

A seminary is a dynamic organism, ever writing a new story. Just as there were colorful characters in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* who undertook a pilgrimage together, so is the story of United, and thankfully we have our share of colorful characters among students, faculty, staff, and alums! While not trying to outdo one another in a storytelling contest—think of the tale of the Wife of Bath—our characters are constructing a narrative of hope, inclusion, and justice. Individual stories become part of the larger institutional memory and hope.

"We are the stories well," a sage reminds us. What we say about ourselves as a person or an institution reinforces and defines our identity. We recognize that it is important for us to look at the stories we tell to see that they faithfully represent the truth about ourselves. It is with gratitude that I can say we are writing a new chapter, and I invite you to add to it.

Thank you for being a part of United's cloud of witnesses who love the school. Thank you for holding the seminary in trust for the future through your giving. Thank you for telling the story of United's vocation in theological education.

Gratefully,

Molly T. Marshall

Molly T. Marshall
Interim President

STUDENT SNAPSHOT FALL 2021

Thanks to our generous donors,
this term we are educating
197 students -- another record in
enrollment over the past decade!

102
MASTER OF
DIVINITY (MDIV)

197
DEGREE-SEEKING
STUDENTS

46
DOCTOR OF
MINISTRY (DMIN)

27
MASTER OF
ARTS (MA)

7
MDIV/MA

15
MASTER OF ARTS IN
LEADERSHIP (MAL)

FALL CONVOCATION

On September 9, United celebrated Fall Convocation, ceremoniously marking the beginning of the new academic year and the first time everyone has been back together on campus since March 2020. We welcomed and installed Rev. Dr. Jessica Chapman Lape, assistant professor and program director for interreligious chaplaincy. Chapman Lape brings experience as a womanist pastoral theologian, clinically trained hospital chaplain, community trained doula, and ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. She has published and presented on the impact of community health education in African American communities, developed faith-based curricula for urban health education programs, and conducted extensive research on the role of faith and spirituality in the health and flourishing of women of color. She gave a message on Genesis 16:1-13, "In the Wilderness: A Womanist Embrace for Liminality." She said:

"I see this text [Gen. 16:1-13] as a testament to the possibility and to the hope that can be birthed out of wilderness, out of injustice, and out of chaos. Just as Hagar ensured her legacy in the midst of her despair, we are at a time in our history where we can birth something powerful out of our wilderness-experience. When we can look back and name who we are and where we have been with boldness and with clarity, we can look forward with courage and with faith to all of the possibilities of beauty, and power, and courage, waiting to be born among us. I know not all of us are womanist Christians, but in my tradition, Spirit is waiting to guide us through the vulnerability of our wilderness, into hope, into change."

Top (L to R): Rev. Karen Hutt, vice president for student and community engagement, Rev. Dr. Jessica Chapman Lape, assistant professor and program director for interreligious chaplaincy, Rev. Nikki Frontz (Solomon's Porch), Ebony Adedayo (Kinky Curly Theological Collective), and Marjorie Grevious ('18). Middle: A collective prayer for Rev. Dr. Chapman Lape led by Rev. Hutt. Bottom: United Dean Kyle Roberts, left, speaks with new faculty, Rev. Dr. Andrew Packman, visiting assistant professor of theological ethics and practical theology supported by the Louisville Institute. Photo credit: Don Breneman.



JOIN US FOR UPCOMING EVENTS AT UNITED

FACULTY FAVORITE LECTURE SERIES

Dr. Demian Wheeler presents:
"The Theological Implications of
Religious Diversity"
October 21, 7:30 PM CT, via Zoom

Dr. Jennifer Awes Freeman presents:
"The Iconography of Advent:
Images of Mary East and West"
December 9, 7:30 PM CT, via Zoom

The lectures are free to attend but
registration is required:
<https://bit.ly/FavoriteLecture>

**Please note that United's updated COVID policy requires
visitors on campus to both wear a mask and to be vaccinated.

AN EVENING OF RECOGNITIONS: NOV. 1

5:30 - 6:15 PM CT
Reception and Distinguished Alum
Award (Bishop David A. Bard and
Minn. State Rep. Rev. Todd Lippert)

6:15 - 7:15 PM CT
Reception and Rev. Dr. James B.
Nelson Classroom Dedication

7:30 - 9:00 PM CT
Plenary Talk: Professor Emerita
Carolyn Pressler

All sessions are available both on campus
and via Zoom. Register:
<https://bit.ly/UTSrecognitions>

FACULTY BOOK EVENT: NOV. 11

Celebrating the paperback release of
Dr. Demian Wheeler's *Religion
Within the Limits of History Alone*,
United invites members of the
community to a special book event.
On Thursday, Nov. 11 at 11:45 AM
CT, join us for a discussion and
Q&A with Dr. Wheeler, associate
professor of philosophical theology
and religious studies, and special
guest Dr. Sheila Greeve Davaney.
Attend on campus or via livestream
online. Register:
<https://bit.ly/wheeler-book-event>



Eh Wah (M.Div. student)

By Sally Howell Johnson ('95)

Hearing the situation that exists in the small, southeast Asian country of Myanmar (formerly Burma) can feel overwhelming to those who have never visited there. Eh Wah (M.Div. student) knows firsthand the turmoil, fear, and despair that can surround those who call this country home, as she did until just a few years ago.

This country is now under military dictatorship and has known ethnic conflict for more than 70 years. Eh Wah is part of the Karen people, was born Christian, and came to this country supported through educational opportunities created by the Baptist church whose missionary presence has been felt there since the late 1800s.

"SAVE BURMA" -- CREATING CHANGE THROUGH SONGS FOR JUSTICE: EH WAH (M.DIV. STUDENT)

Eh Wah is a gifted musician who has recorded music in her native language, first with her husband singing love songs, as well as gospel, praise, and worship music. She has now recorded the song “Save Burma” with her daughter and husband. It has received nearly 200,000 views on YouTube, and many of the comments emphasize the impact the video is making on the hearts of viewers.

Weaving images of Burma in turmoil, she describes it as a song of prayer and lament. Sung in English, Eh Wah answered a call she felt to ‘do something for her country’ following a longing to tell the world about the situation in Burma and the Karen people. Holding a strong belief that art has the power to create change, Eh Wah has written a new song for justice which will be released soon. (View "Save Burma" at: <https://bit.ly/SaveBurmaMusicVideo>)

Following the urging of two Karen graduates of United, Eh Wah enrolled in the Master of Divinity program in order to follow a path of serving as a youth pastor at a Karen Community Church among the Karen refugees from Burma, while continuing her music ministry.

Earlier this year in response to the Myanmar Spring Revolution -- protests in response to the country's military coup d'etat -- Eh Wah led a chapel service at United to pray for the Karen

people and their continued persecution by the Burmese military. Interim President Molly T. Marshall offered the sermon, having visited Myanmar over a dozen times fostering relationships between her former seminary and Myanmar Institute of Theology, connecting with Baptist leaders in outlying areas, and contending for religious freedom and just treatment of LGBTQ+ persons there.

Eh Wah is inspired by what she is learning at United and is focusing her studies on social transformation, asking herself the question: "How can I be involved in change as a religious leader for the future?" She celebrates the differences in theological thought she is experiencing and the support she feels from the faculty and students.

About United, Eh Wah says: "If you live in a house where there is love and care, you know how to love and care. I feel very loved and cared for at UTS. Professors show they are concerned about me and lead me to do the same in my context. I can express my experience and my gifts in my assignments."

Eh Wah is singing to tell the world about the home in which she was born, while celebrating a new sense of home she has found at United.

REV. ANDREA JOHNSON'S ('17) GIFT ESTABLISHES ENDOWED CHAIR AT UNITED JOHNSON-FRY ENDOWED CHAIR IN WORLD RELIGIONS AND INTERCULTURAL STUDIES

United is pleased to announce the establishment of the Johnson-Fry Endowed Chair in World Religions and Intercultural Studies. This tenure-track, endowed faculty position is made possible by a generous, committed, multi-year gift of \$1.75 million from Rev. Andrea Johnson ('17) and David Fry. This investment supports the seminary's progressive values and curriculum that trains ministers, chaplains, social justice and non-profit leaders, and artists for the needs of today and tomorrow in a multifaith, multicultural world.

Speaking to the importance of this endowed gift, Dean Kyle Roberts states, “United educates our students through the lens of a focus on the spiritual, material, and justice-oriented needs of a changing world and through close attention to the evolving cultures in which ministry and spiritual leadership takes place. This generous gift from the Johnson-Fry family provides the natural next step in United’s evolution as a seminary preparing students for ministry, spiritual leadership, non-profit leadership, arts, and social justice advocacy work.”

Proceeds from the endowment will support this faculty position in perpetuity, allowing United to educate the needs of a growing and diverse

student body; to contribute dynamically to a strong and cohesive faculty; and to offer thought leadership regionally and nationally within the field of religious studies from a seminary context.

Rev. Johnson, a Unitarian Universalist minister and member of United’s board of trustees, says, “United’s mission is to educate compassionate, innovative leaders to serve our rapidly changing world. While we are grounded in our Christian heritage, more and more we are educating leaders in religions other than Christianity. And we need all our religious leaders to be deeply responsive to the realities of religious and spiritual diversity. This chair will be instrumental in supporting United’s values and relevance for future leaders. I was transformed by the education I

received at United and am passionate about supporting its future.”

“This catalytic gift from the Johnson-Fry family demonstrates vision and generativity. They are taking a long view that is both empowering and sustaining,” states Interim President Molly T. Marshall. “I give thanks today for these generous givers who are making this much-needed faculty chair possible. Focusing on World Religions and Intercultural Studies, a new professor will strengthen United's profile in a world that beckons respect for the lived religion of others and envisions intercultural competence.”

A national search for the position is underway with the intention of the successful candidate beginning in July 2022.

The Johnson-Fry Family



2021 DISTINGUISHED ALUM: BISHOP DAVID. A. BARD ('84)

United celebrates the 2021 Distinguished Alum Bishop David A. Bard ('84). An ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, Bard has been in ministry for more than 35 years and served for many years as pastor of First United Methodist Church of Duluth, MN. In 2016 Bard was elected bishop by the North Central Jurisdictional Conference and assigned to the Michigan Area. Still serving in that role, he is also acting as the interim bishop of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Bard’s lifetime commitment to the work of anti-racism has been key to his leadership from the beginning. Following the death of George Floyd, he cited *The Book of Discipline*, stating, “The role of the bishop is to be a prophetic voice for justice in a suffering and conflicted world through the tradition of social holiness.”

In a time when there has been great disagreement about theological and social issues, Bard has embraced those challenges, leading with theological grounding, wisdom, and skill. Classmates Rev. Arthur Ritter ('85) and Rev. Stuart Jamieson ('86), who nominated Bard, spoke of his willingness to listen, and his ability to understand those with a different view and opinion.

United gives gratitude for Bishop Bard’s long and significant commitment to justice, love, and living out his call to help people answer their own call to care deeply about a hurting and wounded world. Help us celebrate Bishop Bard on November 1, preceding the dedication of the Rev. Dr. James B. Nelson Classroom and a talk by Professor Emerita Carolyn Pressler (more information in the Events section of this publication). *Read the full announcement about Bishop Bard's transformative career: <https://bit.ly/UnitedDistinguishedAlum>*



Rev. Julie Mall ('85)

This fall, **from November 1 through December 14**, United has an incredible opportunity to **grow our Monthly Sustainer Program**.

BECOME A MONTHLY SUSTAINER OF UNITED -- IT ALL ADDS UP!

CINDY SCHRIEVER, DONOR ENGAGEMENT OFFICER

We have received a generous **matching pledge of \$35,000** from Rev. Julie Mall (M.Div. '85) in honor of her parents, Patricia and Robert Mall.

No matter the size of your gift, when you sign up to become a *new* monthly sustainer donor, or to *increase* your current monthly donation, **United will receive an additional \$500**.

Our goal is to sign up 70 new or increased monthly donors.

Monthly gifts make it easy to give and they have a huge impact. Your monthly donation enables United to take a planned, long-term approach, especially during the summer months.

And each donor who makes a monthly sustaining donation of **\$50 or more** will also be inducted into our **new Lydia Society!** (See below for more information.)

Will you please join our generous community of recurring monthly givers, or increase your already existing monthly gift, in support of United's future transformational and compassionate leaders?

Please consider being a steady resource that United and our students can count on!

Cindy Schriever can be reached at cschriever@unitedseminary.edu or 651-255-6111.

"I am grateful for the education that I received at United. I also greatly appreciate how United equips progressive church leaders and social activists to transform the world into a more just and inclusive place. My parents also supported United, and this seemed like a wonderful opportunity to make a gift in their name.

"Giving monthly to United ensures that it has more consistent and sustainable funds. I hope that my matching gift encourages more people to give to United monthly, or to increase their current monthly gift, and I am excited and grateful that each sustainer commitment made this fall will actually increase my gift's impact as well!"

- Rev. Julie Mall (M.Div. '85)

UNITED ANNOUNCES THE LYDIA SOCIETY IN RECOGNITION OF THE ONGOING SUPPORT OF RECURRING DONORS

United announces a new society -- the Lydia Society -- to recognize the dedication and ongoing commitment of our recurring donors. Together we are crafting United's future.

Lydia Society: The Lydia Society recognizes friends and alums of United who, as recurring monthly donors, give a minimum monthly gift of \$50. Much like Lydia, who was a first century business entrepreneur, church planter, and chief philanthropist of the Philippian congregation, recurring donors provide ongoing sustaining gifts that support United in living out its mission to educate leaders for transformation.

Benefits of Membership: During the inaugural year (January 2022 - December 2022), members of the Lydia Society will receive a monthly 800-word essay from a current or former member of the United Faculty.

Donor Challenge: Rev. Julie Mall (M.Div., '85) will donate \$500 for each *new* monthly donor and any *current* monthly donor who *increases* their giving (see above for more information).

A MESSAGE FROM ADVANCEMENT: "CRAFTING THE FUTURE: HOLY POSSIBILITIES"

REV. DR. CINDI BETH JOHNSON, VICE PRESIDENT

The dictionary defines the word "crafting" as "to make with skill and care, with full attention to detail." As we enter this new year -- the year before our sixtieth anniversary -- that is what we are doing: We are crafting United's future. We are making our way forward with skill and with care, with attention to detail.

Our giving theme for this year reflects that attention to detail, but also reminds us that we don't do this work alone. "Crafting the Future: Holy Possibilities" offers us both a calling and a promise. We do this work together, and we make space for the presence of the Holy. Space for the possibilities that we can't yet imagine, but trust will craft United's future.

In this last year we have been blessed again by your faithful and generous support; we have been encouraged by your consistency. Donor and alum engagement has continued to increase. New and former donors have made significant contributions. Your gifts craft the future and ensure that finances are never a barrier for our students.

There are many ways to help United craft the future. One way is to become a recurring donor like Rev. Michelle S. Miller ('06) and Rev. Robert Kopp ('06).

Kopp and Miller, who met as students at United, have been recurring donors for more than sixteen years. Miller, a lawyer, said United was on her radar before she became a student because of United's emphasis on inclusion. A member of Prospect Park UMC (Minneapolis), she was influenced by the UMC Reconciling community and members of the UMC community, including alum Rev. Kathi Austin Mahle ('78).

Kopp, a registered nurse, was a member of Macalester Plymouth United Church in St. Paul. As a teenager he had been encouraged to go into ministry but instead pursued a career in medicine. Kopp recalls learning about United's emphasis on educating leaders on the forefront of social change. Upon visiting the United campus, Kopp stated simply, "I found my home."

Today Miller and Kopp are both ordained elders who serve as part of the United Methodist Annual Conference. Miller serves three congregations in northwest Minnesota: Wesley United Methodist Church in Crookston, Fosston UMC, and Erskine UMC. Kopp is the minister at Bemidji UMC and works with the Lutheran Campus Ministry in Bemidji.

In order to stay connected to their individual congregations, they share living spaces in both communities. On Sunday mornings, prior to the pandemic, they went their separate ways. Since the pandemic, they have been taping their services jointly -- worshiping for the first time together as they lead their congregations.

When asked about why they were recurring donors, Kopp explains it this way: "When I was a student I received scholarships and awards that covered most of my costs. This is a way to give back."

Miller agreed, and added that she appreciated the simplicity of setting up a recurring gift, knowing that it regularly supports something that she cares about so deeply.

United celebrates recurring donors like Kopp and Miller, members of our new Lydia Society, who are helping us secure the future. We invite you to join them by becoming a monthly recurring donor, or adding a monthly gift to your current giving practice. Recurring donors help craft a future that is filled with Holy possibilities for our students and the communities they will serve.

Cindi Beth Johnson can be reached at cbjohnson@unitedseminary.edu or 651-255-6137.

Rev. Michelle Miller ('06) and Rev. Robert Kopp ('06)



Welcome to a new issue of VOICES!

Our updated publication schedule includes an extended eight-page newsletter delivered in the Fall, Winter, and Spring as a way to regularly connect with donors and friends about the many exciting things happening at the seminary and the world-changing impact made by members of our beloved community.

Stay connected with United:

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UNITED

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
OF THE TWIN CITIES

Education for Transformation

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MINNESOTA GOVERNOR MARK DAYTON RECEIVES HONORARY DOCTORATE FROM UNITED A FORMER TRUSTEE, DAYTON WAS A STUDENT OF REV. DR. JAMES B. NELSON

At Spring Commencement in May, United conferred former Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton with an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters. A former United trustee, Dayton was recognized for his many years of ethical public service, advancing causes like affordable health care, equal educational opportunity, marriage equality, social justice, and peace.

"The Doctorate of Humane Letters is a distinct degree that seeks to affirm the Honorable Mark Dayton's years of public service, his great contributions to the State of Minnesota, and his journey of faith," said United Interim President Molly T. Marshall. "Public service as an expression of faithful vocation matters more than ever in our time. We celebrate and give thanks for the ethical leadership of Mark Dayton."

In the late 1980s, Dayton audited courses at United to study the New Testament and ethics with the late Rev. Dr. James B. Nelson, professor emeritus of Christian Ethics.

He stated that, during this time, "I was at a low point in my life I needed something more. I found it in the UTS community and especially from the Rev. James Nelson."

"I am deeply honored to receive this Honorary Degree from United Theological Seminary, whose community offered me invaluable support along my life's journey," he said.

Pictured below: United faculty with the Honorable Mark Dayton at Spring Commencement. Pictured right: Dayton offers remarks. Photo credit: Michele Jokinen

