

VOICES





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

Dear Friend of United,

The fall term is well under way with 239 total students (including 71 new students) of myriad ages, traditions, and vocational paths experiencing the transformative power of theological education. Like the changing leaves in their many vibrant hues, this diverse student body—a veritable tapestry of distinct perspectives—offers us hope for the future, for the stories yet written and still to be told.

On September 21, we gathered for Convocation to celebrate Rev. T. Michael Rock, our new director of contextual education, and the conclusion of United's 60th anniversary year. What a profound joy to reflect on this 60th year, a time bursting with gratitude and anticipation. (I encourage you to read further about this event in this edition of *VOICES*—pictures included!) Assembled on-site and online, we were reminded not just of the importance of theological education in our stories, but of the particular importance of United—its unique and generative work in our communities.

Communities thrive when they are led with compassion and creativity. This is the task of theological education, the soul of United's mission, to prepare and equip leaders who will cultivate sustainable communities. In the pages that follow, you will catch glimpses into the still-unfolding stories of United. From the restorative contributions of alums in the lives of our incarcerated neighbors to the witness of a minister whose theology necessarily intermingles with art, transformative ministry radiates in and through those for whom United has made the difference.

Your persistent support enables stories like these and so many more. Transformative education is made possible through transformative generosity. Recently, I attended an event honoring Ms. Patricia Shield Ayres, a remarkable paragon of philanthropy whose work for justice shines forth over her long life. Kindly, she has included United in the giving of The Shield-Ayres Foundation. She believes that what this seminary affirms—interreligious engagement, the human dignity of all, and clear advocacy for racial justice—is near to her heart. I am cheered by her willingness to join our story.

May these testimonies be life-giving for each of us, affirming our shared commitment to communities, churches, and a society that abides in justice and peace.

Gratefully,

Molly T. Marshall

Molly T. Marshall
President

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ARTIST PROFILE PATSY HERBERT* ('15)

A lifelong learner and consummate artist, Patsy Herbert* ('15) studied art in schools and foreign locales and worked as a potter, costumer, computer graphics artist, milliner, Renaissance Festival shop owner, knitter, book maker, and paper artist all before enrolling at United.

One of her proudest accomplishments was earning an MDiv at United. Though she studied in many remarkable settings, Patsy always said the most creative place she had ever been was at United, where she found the intersection between art and theology.

The cover art features a piece that Patsy did upon returning from a United Global Immersion trip to Guatemala in



FALL 2023 CONVOCATION

Between stirring anthems of hope, exhortations to justice, readings, and poetry, members of the United community gathered in the chapel and online at 12:15 PM on September 21 to observe Fall Convocation. A celebration of Rev. T. Michael Rock as our new director of contextual education and spiritual development as well as the conclusion of United's 60th anniversary year, this auspicious occasion corresponded with the beginning of a new academic year—one in which 71 new students have begun their journey at United.

We are grateful that Linda Williams, a council member of Mizpah UCC, shared her story at convocation. Honored in our spring issue of *VOICES*, Mizpah UCC has provided a generous legacy gift in the form of a scholarship. President Molly T. Marshall offered gratitude on behalf of United for a contribution that will hold Mizpah's name in perpetuity.

Rev. Rock, in remarks titled "Remembering Our Calling," shared his observations on the state of the Church and society, "Churches and nonprofits and organizations need grounded and whole spiritual leaders, and we at United—the faculty and staff—are ready to form them." In conclusion, he urged those gathered: "It is our calling to be imitators of the mystics...who mentor us through our story of liberation and unconditional love. And then, we can act as guides and mentors as we train and form the next generation of guides and mentors, who are beloved children, who do this work in the world. Because, at the core of it all, 'the world is on fire, and it needs your voice.'"

We give thanks for this time of celebration and reflection. And now, we look ahead with anticipation for all that is in store for us this year at United.

Photos by Hillary Vamstad. If you were unable to join us for Fall Convocation, the service can be streamed online via YouTube at bit.ly/fall-2023-convocation.



2011. The work features the faces of the 'disappeared' juxtaposed with the bright images and scenic views most often seen by tourists. Each piece includes just one or up to 12 faces of the disappeared.

Of this work Patsy wrote, "From 1970–1986 more than 25,000 people were 'disappeared' in Guatemala by the Guatemala Army. The United States trained many of the Guatemala Army leaders in

military techniques, including 'techniques' of torture and murder at the School of the Americas. The disappeared were buried in clandestine graves."

To tell the full story, Patsy downloaded photos of the 'disappeared' and combined them with beautiful photos of Guatemala, coloring them, so the faces of the lost ones blended into the final image.

Patsy went on to say, "I hope you will see their faces. I hope that this speaks to the feeling that the disappeared are always with us and that as life goes on, we feel their presence and work to ensure this never happens again."

For Patsy's many gifts, colorful spirit, and steadfast commitment to justice, we will always be grateful.

* Deceased

REV. CANON TYRONE FOWLKES MELTS ART AND JUSTICE INTO HIS MINISTRY

by Diane Riggs

Born into a religious family, DMin student Rev. Canon Tyrone Fowlkes grew up in what he describes as, for years, “the only Black Wesleyan Church in Indiana—what I affectionately call the ‘old church.’” He credits his upbringing in the church for giving him “the faith for which I will always be grateful.” These days, however, Tyrone has moved past his conservative upbringing and embraced a vision of ministering through faith, justice, and art.

“Growing up,” Tyrone remembers, “I had an acute awareness of mistreatment and injustice...and was particularly attuned...when it occurred in the church.” He guesses that a desire to call out unjust treatment of women and those in the LGBTQ+ community perhaps fueled his sense of call to ordination. “I had a burgeoning career as an art director,” Tyrone shares, “when I noticed what felt like a tug at my spirit.” In 1995, he enrolled in an MDiv program at Christian Theological Seminary (CTS)—affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)—in Indianapolis.

CHOOSING UNITED FOR THE NEXT STEP

The pandemic caused Tyrone to re-examine his life and future. He already had several years of practical ministry experience, but no clear direction. “Suddenly,” he recounts, “I could sense an urgency to start weaving together my life as an artist, my history in social services, and my passion for justice.” It was time to move on to a doctorate degree.

Why United? “I’ve known about United for a long time,” Tyrone explains. He remembers reading United’s journal, *ARTS: The Arts in Religion and Theological Studies*, at CTS and says it was one of the few resources that allowed him to “envision being an artist and a leader in the church.” In the end, “the decision to enroll at United was the obvious choice.”

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

As he pursues his DMin, Tyrone says he’s been gleaned lessons both from faculty and fellow students. “I’m learning,” he says, “that effective religious leadership right now is dependent on openness, understanding, and flexibility. I see great examples of this in my peers who are engaged in some rather challenging ministry contexts.” To make an impact, he asserts, “We now have to minister...in contexts that are increasingly multi-faith, spirituality-fluid, and secular.”

Faculty, Tyrone suggests, encourage students to develop the capacity to hold in balance ambiguity and uncertainty while embracing spontaneity and creativity. He credits his Public Theology, Engaging in a Multi-Faith World, and Arts for Leadership classes for “tapping into some of the problem-solving skills which I intuitively practice as an artist in ways that also apply to the various arenas in which I travel as a priest.”



Rev. Canon Tyrone Fowlkes

At present, Tyrone is serving as the Canon for Congregational Life at Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral, a position he accepted last year. He notes that while the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) helped him recognize his ministerial gifts, the Episcopal Church inspired in him the desire to become ordained and step into the priesthood. Tyrone is currently in his 14th year of the priesthood.

Equipped with his DMin in Theology and the Arts, Tyrone hopes to “start integrating everything that I have pondered, learned, and experimented with in the arts, in social justice, and in ministry.” He can envision a new model of ministry at the “intersection of faith, justice, and art” that will help faith communities “deepen their connections to the neighborhoods they occupy” and gain the skills they need “to affect social change.”



Ted Meads and Phil Johnson

UNITED’S SOCIAL GOSPEL FOOTBALL PROGRAM

In United’s long history of social justice work, no episode evokes more incredulity than the seminary’s brief foray into football. That’s right: United had a football team 1967–68.

The inspired instigator was Mike Groh* (‘69). A third-year student, Mike had talked to the chaplain at Stillwater State Prison about forming a seminary team to play the Colts, the prison’s football team. Using equipment borrowed from a high

school and Augsburg College, 12 intrepid seminarians ventured to Stillwater prison in October 1967.

Because United had just 12 players, most had to play both offense and defense. Student Phil Johnson, for example, played quarterback and defensive tackle. Ted Meads (‘71) was a wide receiver and defensive end. Mike was a wide receiver and defensive back. Gary Miller* (‘68) was a halfback and defensive linebacker, and Rich Grobe (‘72)—who broke his hand during the game—was a running back and defensive guard. The Colts, Ted and Phil estimate, had 30–40 players.

ALUMS REV. DR. SUE ALLERS-HATLIE AND REV. LYNDA LEE PROMOTE HEALING IN PRISONS

by Diane Riggs

Rev. Dr. Susan Allers-Hatlief ('85, '04) and Rev. Lynda Lee ('14) are prison chaplains. Sue, an Association of Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) Certified Educator, teaches CPE to prisoners and seminarians inside Minnesota Correctional Facility (MCF)-Stillwater. Lynda, a trauma-informed care specialist, runs a grief and loss class at MCF-Lino Lakes. In their work, both have created uniquely effective means of ministering within prisons.

ANSWERING A CALL

Sue was raised in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and considered being a lawyer or probation officer. Directed by her Lutheran college to a seminary, her burgeoning interest in prison chaplaincy was deemed an unacceptable path. Stepping away, she found a CPE course at the University of Minnesota and a mentor who pointed her to United and the UCC.

United offered a contextual formation process to meet Sue's goals. She studied liberation theology with Rev. Dr. Robert Bryant, Professor Emeritus of Constructive Theology, who took students on an eye-opening trip to Central and South America where poverty and oppression mirrors the US "pipeline to prison." She completed an internship at MCF-Shakopee, a women's prison, with alum Carrie Dorfman* ('78).

Lynda, a music major in college, has always been creative. She discovered United through a United/Minneapolis Institute of

Arts joint project and *ARTS: The Arts in Religion and Theological Studies*. Gradually, Lynda realized she wanted to work with people in prison and began volunteering. When her friend, Patsy Herbert* ('15—see cover art), said she was taking classes at United, Lynda decided to apply.

Working full time, Lynda earned her MDiv in six years. A CPE unit taught her to recoup energy expended in ministering. United's arts emphasis helped her value the process of creation as storytelling and subvert the idea of failure. In her final semester, Lynda met Dr. Rita Nakashima Brock, whose book, *Soul Repair*, reinforced the practice of using art in narrative healing.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In 1998, Sue started a DMin at United and Certified Educator Training through ACPE. Rev. Dr. Christie Cozad Neuger ('80), Professor Emerita of Pastoral Counseling and Pastoral Theology, guided Sue's work in narrative therapy. Sue then offered CPE units in correctional settings. In 2019, she sought funding to expand CPE training to imprisoned leaders so they could gain credits and learn spiritual care skills. It was the first such program in the US.

Since finishing CPE units with seminarians and incarcerated leaders, Sue asserts that "doing CPE inside prisons is a way to practice anti-racist commitments, integrate restorative justice, and live out liberation theology." It is also systems change.



Rev. Lynda Lee and Rev. Dr. Sue Allers-Hatlief

Prison chaplaincy is vital to restorative justice. As Lynda explains, when she can help people to deconstruct sources of their pain/grief, become aware of somatic responses to feelings, and accept that past events and actions do not have to define them or their future, a new life story becomes possible. "Real healing," she adds, comes from "addressing losses that have been unarticulated and offering compassion to those parts of yourself."

Lynda also seeks out relevant spiritual resources for the diversity of faith communities at the prison. For this work, she says, "United continues to offer a deep bench of consults."

"What would I have done without United honoring my deep desire to do this work?" Sue asks. She has won national awards for being prophetic and innovative. "United seminarians," she adds, "have been amazing, and transformations are literally contagious as the learning unfolds between all of the students!"

* Deceased

What was it like to play offense and defense? "That's the way to have fun," Phil asserts. As Ted recalls, "I was running for my life!"

Professor Emeritus of Constructive Theology, Rev. Dr. Donald White, served as the titular coach, but Mike and Phil—both of whom played football collegiately—were the de facto leaders. It was Mike who yelled at Ted, who had just recovered a fumble, "Get up and run! It's a live ball!"

Though United prevailed in this initial game with the Colts (20–13), the heart of the experience came after the final

whistle. That's when members of both teams met together for lunch in a small dining room.

Stereotypes and divisions dissolved as the seminarians and prisoners talked about game highlights, and compared notes about their lives and hopes for the future. Notes Ted, "This was a true example of what [United] preached as being open and responsive to others. It was a valuable lesson and quite a day for all."

Since many of United's football players are now in their 70s and 80s (or of blessed memory), it's unlikely that Phil and Ted

will be able to revive the program. Still, remembering this bit of history is a source of joy and reflection that engenders gratitude for the many ways in which United has worked for more than six decades to create a loving and beloved community for all.

* Deceased

THE LASTING LEGACY OF MARION AND HILDEGARD BUNGE

by Cindi Beth Johnson

For twin sisters Marion and Hildegard, life centered around church. Their father, Rev. John Bunge, was pastor of Pleasant Prairie Evangelical Church when they were born. Later, he served in judicatory roles and, at the time of his death, was pastor of St. Paul's United Church of Christ (UCC) in Welcome, Minnesota. Hildegard and Marion grew up in and stayed at St. Paul's.

As their niece, Lisa, explains, "I think church was important to them because that is how they were brought up. Their father was a minister, their mother played the organ, so doing church things were important. It is just what they did."

When their brother, Jonathan* ('63), decided to follow in his father's footsteps, their mother enlisted the twins to help with tuition expenses. Like many students today, he was able to attend seminary because he had financial support. The sisters gave their first gifts to United in 1967.

Tragically, Jonathan died in 1969. In his honor, classmates established the Jonathan Bunge Memorial Scholarship and the sisters' donations then provided ongoing support to his endowed scholarship. They also planned a legacy gift; in death, as in life, they made a gift to support the Bunge Memorial Scholarship.

Identical twins, Marion and Hildegard dressed alike their whole lives. Their lives and work were also closely aligned. Graduates of St. Cloud's Teacher's College,

they both taught phy ed and health in southern Minnesota.

The twins supported girls' athletics before it was popular. They involved girls in sports, and organized and coached girls' gymnastics and volleyball in the 1950s and 1960s. Nominated to the Coaches Hall of Fame, State Volleyball Coaches Hall of Fame, and the Minnesota State High School League Hall of Fame, they were active with the National Physical Education Association and traveled to the 1960 Rome Olympics.

Though they retired in 1981, the sisters remained active. They were very involved in St. Paul's UCC, worked for Habitat for Humanity, and enjoyed traveling, walking, gardening, and visiting family.

Jonathan Bunge isn't the only alum in the family. In 2004, 41 years after Jonathan earned his degree, his grandson—Rev. Brian Wohlhuter—graduated. Brian chose United because he wanted to attend a UCC-affiliated seminary and serve as a UCC minister.

Brian says of United, "It was invaluable in my faith formation. It was at United where my childhood beliefs were challenged and I was forced to form my own thoughts and beliefs around my Christian faith... United gave me the freedom to ask questions and not be chastised for doing so. The ability to question, and yet take seriously, what the Bible says allowed me to form my beliefs and make my faith my own."

ALUM HONORS UNITED'S 60TH WITH \$60 FOR 60 YEARS

Rev. Marva Jean Hutchens ('80) has many touchpoints with United. While a teacher in Osseo, Minnesota, she started taking night classes after a fellow United Methodist Church member noted he was a student. Night classes gave way to regular classes, and Marva Jean graduated in 1980. Thinking back, Marva Jean says she really valued the small classes, the integrative style of learning, constructive theology and ethics courses, the faculty,

and opportunities for Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE).

She ultimately found her calling in pastoral ministry and served in several Minnesota UMC churches after graduating. While serving as a UMC district superintendent, Marva Jean also joined United's board of trustees—a board she had served on as a student. Then, in 1996, she was honored as United's Distinguished Alum.

When United's 60th anniversary was announced, Marva Jean wondered how she could honor the seminary's landmark



Marion and Hildegard Bunge

At the time of her death in 2023, Hildegard was 97. Marion died two years earlier, almost to the day, at 95. Services were held at their church home, and Brian preached at both funerals.

As he described his great-aunts, Brian said, "For them, a way to live out their faith and express their Christianity was to be vital members of the church...the [physical one] and the wider United Church of Christ. They gave of themselves to support both." Marion and Hildegard's faithful gifts to their brother's Bunge Memorial Scholarship will support the wider church for years to come as they support the next generation of leaders. Blessed be the memory of the Bunge sisters.

* Deceased

SUPPORT A RIGOROUS EDUCATION FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS

To learn more about Legacy Giving and Barnabas Society membership, contact Cindy Schriever, our Donor Engagement Officer, at 651-255-6111 or cschriever@unitedseminary.edu.

milestone. "If the walls could talk," she posited, "they would tell stories of professors who shared their passion for and commitment to theological education; of students who were transformed by their professors and peers; of seminary presidents who ably led unique chapters in United's evolving story; and of trustees from varied backgrounds who acted in accord to share their gifts and guidance."

Marva Jean is also convinced that United, as it continues to push issues of social justice into the fore, "is well positioned to give leadership to our world." She

A MESSAGE FROM ADVANCEMENT

REV. DR. CINDI BETH JOHNSON, VICE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends of United,

Your investment in United allows us to live out our mission to prepare innovative and compassionate leaders for the equipping of churches, other faith communities, and society toward justice and peace. Your generosity as donors provides student scholarships, unrestricted operating funds, and the financial support necessary for United to do this holy work.

One way we honor our donors is through our giving societies. Giving societies mark a particular level of donor commitment. The Joshua Society (donors who have given over \$50,000), the Bossard-Ward Society (alums who have given \$10,000) and the Barnabas Society (donors with a legacy intention) have been around for many years. We have been grateful to honor these members in a variety of ways.

In the last two years we have added two new giving societies: the Lydia Society and the Leadership Society. The Lydia Society recognizes friends and alums of United who, as recurring donors, give a minimum monthly gift of \$50. Much like Lydia from the book of Acts, recurring donors provide ongoing sustaining gifts that support United in living out its mission and planning for a vibrant future. Members of the Lydia Society receive a monthly essay written by a student, alum, or faculty member.

In one recent Lydia essay, alum Kiely Todd Roska ('05) shares what she values most about her experiences at United. Graciously, she says, "I think the biggest gift that United gave me was a deep and meaningful spiritual formation process. United was a space where I could be both supported and challenged as I wrestled with how I understand God, the church, justice, sin, and what it means to be a human being living in the world."

adds, "The impact on individuals, faith communities, and groups committed to address cultural issues must continue."

So, how to honor United in its 60th year? "After prayerful consideration," Marva Jean generously concluded, "I decided to make an additional gift to my annual giving by offering \$60 for each of United's 60 years to express gratitude for how my life has been influenced by the United community."

Have you given in honor of United's 60th anniversary? If not, Marva Jean

says, "please reflect on what might be an appropriate gift from you. A parishioner in an earlier appointment said, 'Don't ask people to give until it hurts; ask them to give until it feels good.'"

We are extraordinarily grateful for Marva Jean's donation and her belief that United is a "prophetic voice in the culture." Thank you for supporting United's vision and mission!

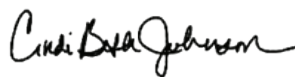
The Leadership Society honors friends whose cumulative giving in all categories totals \$10,000 or more. These transformational gifts reflect their commitment to United's work in congregational ministry, theology and the arts, social justice, and interreligious engagement in the classroom and the community. We are grateful for their faithful commitment to the ongoing work of United as members of the Leadership Society.

The number of members in our giving societies continues to grow. I invite you to consider becoming a member of one (or several) of our giving societies. If you would like to learn more about the societies, please let me know. I would be very happy to have a conversation with you.

However you currently donate, we give thanks for your faithful commitment. Your support helps us educate ethical, justice-driven leaders for the generations to come.

Thank you for your generosity and for your commitment to transformative education for the church and society.

With profound thanks,



Cindi Beth Johnson
Vice President for Advancement

HOW TO GIVE

Mail your gift in the attached envelope, scan the QR code, or visit unitedseminary.edu/give to give today.



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UNITED LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

In mid-August, United unveiled a completely redesigned, redeveloped, and reinvigorated website! Completed in partnership with Twin Cities-based digital marketing agency Perrill, the revised site significantly improves United's online presence to better serve our seminary mission.

In celebration, President Molly T. Marshall reflected:

A website provides a window to the world, a portal through which one learns of the unique identity of a school and discerns whether it provides what one is seeking. United's new website invites those who love theological education or are simply curious about its formative work to take a closer look. We hope to meet you there soon.

All existing, and some new content, is included in the site. In addition to a modernized, responsive design, the site better structures and surfaces critical information, providing prospective applicants, current students, and alums with a more enjoyable experience. A new sitewide menu and interactive sidebars allow for greater contextualization, serving our community's varied needs with organized content.

Most importantly, our mission—our core values—are reflected clearly throughout our new site. Updated imagery and graphical elements frame the rich, ongoing story and legacy of United's work promoting justice in the world. The work of transformative theological education, the heart of all we do, requires that we innovate and imagine new tools that support our students and alums as they are equipped for and enter myriad vocational callings.

As you experience this new online space at unitedseminary.edu, we hope United's artistic, diverse, and hopeful spirit shines through.

