

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE TWIN CITIES

FALL 2024



VOICES





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

Dear Friend of United,

We are in the waning days of election season. Campaigns are working ceaselessly to persuade and turn out voters, and as recipients of their (at times) onerous messages, we may find ourselves on edge. We approach a challenging horizon, and there are disparate paths before us.

As stewards of democracy, the questions before us are immense: Who do we aspire to be? How do we love our neighbor, locally and globally, in good conscience? How do we care for the common good?

We might ask: What is the common good?

Even as the tenor of our civic life reaches a fevered pitch, I find solace in the good graces of our United community. A new academic year has begun, and United students are bringing varied traditions and perspectives to bear in their studies, engaging their values in an earnest desire to—if I may cite John Wesley—“do all the good [they] can, in all the ways [they] can.”

We know it to be transformative for the common good of the Church and society, yet theological education at United remains as personal as it is collective. It transforms us individually, refining our value systems through inquiry, community, and expansive creativity. Rather than working toward a prescribed set of answers, United students are taught how to ask better questions. After all, how else might we best engage our civic conscience than with the deepest questions of life and meaning? This is the deep charism of our seminary.

In the pages that follow, you will be encouraged by the public witness of United students, alums, and donors committed to the common good. These innovative and compassionate leaders, some just beginning this work, inspire us to hope for a future transformed by justice and peace.

These turbulent times require much of us, yet we are heartened in our efforts. Just as Paul entreated his Galatian collaborators, may we “not grow weary” in our care for the common good.

Inspired by the witness of this community,

Molly T. Marshall

Rev. Molly T. Marshall, PhD
President

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ARIST PROFILE — REV. CARA B. HOCHHALTER ('08)

Rev. Cara B. Hochhalter's passion for the arts and ministry led her to move to Minnesota to attend United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. While other seminaries embrace the musical arts in ministry, it was United's emphasis on visual art that inspired Cara to pursue an MDiv with an Arts Concentration.

While at United, she coordinated an exhibit/worship experience around the injustice

of war. She also created 40 block prints to interpret Gospel stories—prints later included in a book, *A Challenging Peace in the Life and Stories of Jesus*. (See illustration of the Mustard Seed to the right.)

After graduating from United, Cara was called to a UCC congregation in Charlemont, Massachusetts. She served there for 10 years, incorporating art into worship services

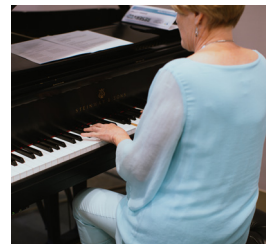
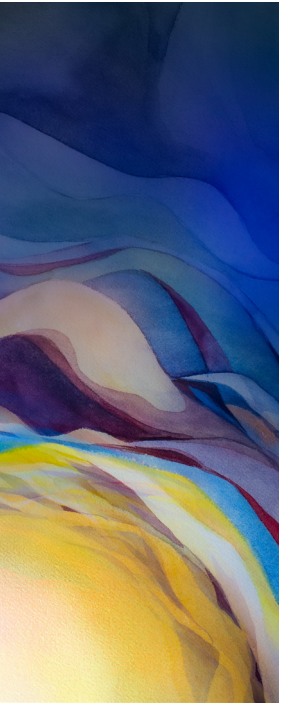


FALL CONVOCATION: INSTALLING DR. DEMIAN WHEELER INTO THE SOPHIA CHAIR IN RELIGIOUS AND THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

On September 26, 2024, more than 150 members of the United community gathered for Fall Convocation to honor an auspicious occasion. Friends and alums, students, faculty, staff, and trustees celebrated the generosity of Dr. Mary Farrell Bednarowski and Keith Bednarowski, whose gift endows the Sophia Chair in Religious and Theological Studies.

On deciding to name the chair Sophia, Mary reflects, "I like to think of Sophia as the patron (Molly prefers "guiding") spirit of asking both new and old, profound, life-giving questions. I like to think of her as the inspiring spirit of the theological and religious imagination." In his remarks during the installation ceremony, Dr. Demian Wheeler emphasized Mary's multivalent legacy, noting that "Sophia conjures the feminine spirit of the Divine" and "points to the long and ongoing legacy of women's religious thought at United."

For all who joined us, for Demian, and for the profound generosity of Keith and Mary Farrell Bednarowski, we give thanks.



and bulletins, and discovering the "art" of creating sermons.

Now retired, Cara lives in Hyde Park, New York, where she still revels in the symbiotic relationship between art and ministry. She has created two quilt squares to honor the African American legacy of a group called Celebrating the African Spirit in Poughkeepsie. She also created 45 charcoal drawings to illustrate prayers written by Rev. Allen Comstock in *Seasonings: Prayers of Praise and Complaint*.

Cara's latest project is a self-published book, *Where Do Butterflies Go at Night? and Other Pollinator Ponderings*. In the book, she combines watercolor, block prints, and photography to answer 30 questions about pollinators for kids of all ages. The cover art for this issue of *VOICES* is from this book.

Cara believes that the visual arts can be a window into a larger spirit that feels Holy. She is grateful to United for providing such excellent guidance in this direction.





SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION STUDENT DOE HOYER FOLLOWS THE SPIRIT

by Diane Riggs

Doe Hoyer, who is pursuing an MDiv in Social Transformation, grew up southeast of the Twin Cities. Their grandfather was a Lutheran pastor. "I really had a strong love and resonance with him as a child," Doe shares, but "as a queer child I always felt like a misfit" at the family's Lutheran church. It has taken some time, but since starting at United, Doe has found where their gifts can flourish and grow.

THE SLOW ROAD TO SEMINARY

When Doe was 16, they experienced a "devastating loss" when a cousin tragically died. Retrospectively, they acknowledge there was a "missed opportunity for spiritual care there." That trauma turned Doe away from religion and spirituality for many years.

After earning a BA in linguistics at Macalester College, Doe's early jobs included teaching ESL to Latinx and Somali adults. Though teaching a colonizing language bothered Doe, they learned how challenging it is for immigrants to navigate American systems.

Meanwhile, through involvement with the local Reclaiming Pagan community, Doe found "a thread of earth-based spirituality" and "community singing." They also made an important connection with United alum Colleen Cook* ('12), with whom they lived for six months. Not only did Colleen share stories about their time at United, they proved to be a "vocal encourager."

During what they describe as a "seven-year discernment process," Doe took on more leadership roles, learned how to be a community song leader, and had experiences which affirmed the spirituality in nature. Then, just a few weeks before Colleen passed away in 2019, they texted Doe: "Maybe you want to apply to United."

GROWING INTO AN ORGANIZER

"Reckoning with my Christian roots and learning more at United," Doe asserts, "has allowed me to have so much more flexible thinking about Christianity." They made strong connections with other students in their "incredible" formation class with Rev. Dr. John Lee ('19). Rev. Dr. Jessica Chapman Lape's "amazing classes" have "yielded connections with inspiring chaplains," and they treasure the feedback and encouragement from professors Rev. Dr. Andrew Packman, Rev. Dr. Gary Green, and Rev. Dr. Justin Sabia-Tanis.

For the past year, Doe has also worked as an organizer and song leader for the Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery. The Coalition, co-founded by Sarah Augustine—a

Pueblo (Tewa) descendant—"calls on the Christian Church to address the extinction, enslavement, and extraction done in the name of Christ on Indigenous lands."

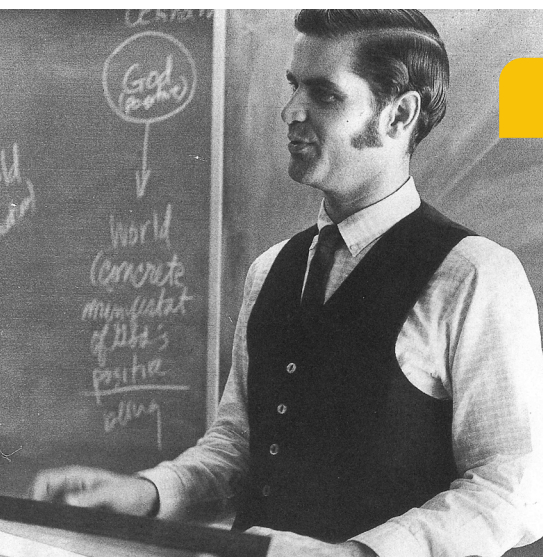
Doe's local involvement with repair communities for Makoce Ikikcupi, the Dakota land recovery project, helped them get the job. Doe believes lessons learned in United's social transformation and chaplaincy courses have strengthened their organizing abilities.

As Doe explains it, chaplaincy's emphasis on remaining present and open with another helps temper the social transformation push for action and systemic change. Moving between these skill sets helps Doe forge deeper and longer-lasting relationships with other activist organizers.

FOLLOWING THE SPIRIT

"I could not be doing this work," Doe attests, "without the learning and reflective experiences I have had through United." They now encourage others to check out the seminary. "We need people who are going to engage robustly with their own spirituality, what it means to bring that to others in this world," and how that can play out in meaningful service.

**Deceased*



REMEMBERING REV. DR. DON WHITE

Early this summer, we received news that Rev. Dr. Don White, Professor Emeritus of Constructive Theology, 1965–2002, had passed away at the age of 89. Tributes poured in immediately.

During his 37-year tenure at United, Don taught both historical theology and constructive theology. At his retirement, he noted that his favorite courses were process

theology (which he began teaching in 1966) and popular culture (a course he taught starting in 1977).

Rev. Dr. Clyde Steckel, professor emeritus, recalls being "struck by his keen mind... I was pleased to find him on the United faculty.... Don was especially good at teaching process theology and helping students transition from traditional theologies needing to be

REV. GLORIA ROACH THOMAS ('98) MINISTERS THROUGH LOVE, HEALING, AND HOPE IN A HURTING WORLD

by Diane Riggs

Rev. Gloria Roach Thomas ('98) grew up in a small town in South Carolina. As she recalls, "I drank out of the colored water fountains, I went to the colored elementary school." Still, she reflects, the surrounding community "told us we were someone, even when the world said we were not." Her father was a community activist and civil rights proponent, and her parents gave back to the community.

What brought Gloria to Minnesota? "I came to Minnesota in 1976 on a bet with my cousin," she admits. "We wanted to live somewhere for one year away from our homes." Much to the chagrin of her family and friends, Gloria ended up staying in the Twin Cities and started her ministry here.

THE PATH TO UNITED

Gloria's years at Model Cities of St. Paul, Inc.—helping underserved families and individuals access education, financial knowledge, housing, and health services—inspired her to consider seminary. While there, she met successful United alums, and even got to know a person on staff at United.

After a tour of the space in New Brighton and a fact-finding meeting, Gloria decided to apply. "My interest in attending United was met with interest and respect," she remembers, "so it was United that I decided on."

TREASURING EXPERIENCE

At United, Gloria states, "I most treasured the overall theme of human inclusion in ministry." She reveled in the variety of religions, denominations, and philosophies she found, the broad acceptance of gender expressions, "a variety of ways to refer to God," and exposure to Womanist Theology.

After graduating (MDiv, with a Pastoral Congregational Care emphasis), Gloria asserts that the pastoral care and grief education she received at United enabled her to reach the goal of supporting families who have lost kin to tragedies such as suicide or murder. For 14 years, she taught "Death and Dying across Cultures and Religions" in the Mortuary Sciences Program at the University of Minnesota. Gloria has led grief sessions with congregations, supported hospital staff, and worked with bereaved families.

During that time, Gloria also became ordained as a United Methodist Elder, and ministered at several Twin Cities Churches, including Brooklyn United Methodist Church in Brooklyn Center, and Camphor Memorial United Methodist Church in St. Paul. While at Camphor, Gloria helped launch a building renovation and construction project to develop gathering spaces for community support programs.



"RE-FIRE-MENT"

In 2018, Gloria announced her retirement from full-time work. She likes to call it "re-fire-ment"—re-firing into something new. In honor of her decades of dedication to community service and ministry, Governor Mark Dayton declared June 2, 2018, as Rev. Gloria Roach Thomas Day. In 2019, St. Paul & Minnesota Foundation named her as its local Facing Race Award recipient.

In a video recorded for the Facing Race Award, Gloria credits her parents and home community for their strength and courage. "I stand on their shoulders," she avows. "I would not take anything for that journey because it really began to take hold of who I am and it... set me on a journey." More recently, Gloria shared that "God has allowed me many great ministry opportunities to assist in bringing love, healing, justice, and hope to a world that desperately needs it."

United is truly honored and blessed to count Gloria as one of its transformational alums.

deconstructed and then reconstructed." Mary Kay Huntley Sauter ('95) fondly remembers Don for "Process Theology." She continues, "Process theology is my theology because of him. Very grateful."

"A seminary professor is able to leave a graceful imprint in the lives of students and faculty colleagues," reflects current President Molly T. Marshall. "From all I have read of the service of Don White at United, I would echo the words of the writer of the Apocalypse: his 'deeds will accompany him' (Rev. 14:13b)."

For all the students he taught, mentored, and coached, all the faculty and staff with whom he worked, and his service to the church, United is deeply grateful for the legacy of Rev. Dr. Don White, now of blessed memory.

A service for Don will take place at Community Church of Vero Beach in Florida on what would have been Don's 90th birthday, November 23, 2024.



JACK AND MARTY ROSSMANN RAISE THE BAR FOR STEADFAST, ENDURING SUPPORT

by Diane Riggs

Dr. Jack Rossmann, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Macalester College, and Dr. Marty Rossmann, Professor Emerita of Family Education at the University of Minnesota, are deeply invested in education. As a measure of their devotion, the couple has set up faculty development scholarships at both schools. So when did United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities come into focus? Early and often.

Jack and Marty Rossmann first learned about United in the early 1960s from their pastor at Plymouth Congregational Church in Minneapolis. Jack remembers how the pastor, Rev. Dr. Howard Conn,* excitedly “told the congregation about the “new” United Theological Seminary that was being developed in New Brighton.”

A second touchpoint came when Rev. Dr. Dayton Hultgren, a colleague of Jack’s at Macalester College, became United’s second president in 1971. A few years later, Marty and Jack became friends with Rev. Dr. Thomas Campbell*—United’s academic vice president and dean 1974–1979—and his wife, Donna.*

Jack also helped Virginia (Ginny) Brooks,* an emerita United board member (1982–1990), with an accreditation issue at another school where Brooks served on the board. Finally, it was Ginny who connected Jack with United president Rev. Dr. Howard Mills* (1983–1987) to discuss joining United’s board.

At the time, Jack was nearing the end of his eight-year term as Vice President of Academic Affairs at Macalester. His only concern was that United’s president and board might look askance at welcoming a new member now affiliated with the Unitarian church. Jack and Marty had joined Unity Church-Unitarian in the 1970s.

Happily, his concern was not warranted and Jack has now served on United’s board of directors not just once, but twice. By the time he finishes his current and second board term in 2025, Jack will have spent a total of more than 20 years as a trustee, and Jack and Marty will have spent more than 40 years as dedicated United donors.

While on the board, Jack led two search committees for a new United president. He helped bring Rev. Dr. Benjamin Griffin* (1987–1995)—United’s fifth president—to the seminary a couple years after first joining the board in 1984. In his second (current) stint on the board, he led the committee that brought Rev. Dr. Molly T. Marshall—United’s current president—to United in 2021.

What has inspired Jack and Marty to keep supporting United? Jack asserts that his

service on the board has “been very satisfying.” He adds, “I have enjoyed working with excellent board members, fine seminary leadership, and first-rate faculty, staff, and students.” The ongoing support, he explains, comes from a deep and abiding belief in United’s mission.

Just last year, Jack and Marty became members of the Joshua Society, and they also have planned a legacy gift—two more signs of their steadfast generosity. For his part, Jack declares, “Thanks to the leadership of [President] Molly T. Marshall..., United is in a stable financial condition that augurs well for its ongoing strength and resilience. Marty and I are pleased to contribute to that financial stability.”

We are blessed to have an enduring relationship with Marty and Jack Rossmann, two dedicated and humble servants promoting progressive education.

**Deceased*

Support a rigorous education for the next generation with a legacy gift.

To learn more about Legacy Giving and Barnabas Society membership, contact Rev. Dr. Cindi Beth Johnson at 651-255-6137 or cbjohnson@unitedseminary.edu.

MEET THESE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Funded by generous donors like you, scholarships make transformative theological education possible for the next generation of organizational leaders, social activists, scholars, and congregational ministers.

Recipients highlighted here are being equipped to cultivate

the just and peaceful society envisaged by United’s mission.

Interested in funding a student scholarship?

We can help you! Contact Rev. Dr. Cindi Beth Johnson at cbjohnson@unitedseminary.edu.



Kateri Boucher

Dayton Scholarship Recipient

United felt like an answer to my prayers—offering me an opportunity to stay rooted in my local communities while also joining an ecumenical seminary community that is committed to social transformation and justice.... Financial aid and scholarship support from United has been instrumental in allowing me to attend seminary while still maintaining my commitments to community and service.

A MESSAGE FROM ADVANCEMENT

REV. DR. CINDI BETH JOHNSON

Dear Friends of United,

There is always an air of excitement at the beginning of a new academic year at United! New and returning students are already weeks into the term, reading, writing, creating, bearing the fruit of transformative theological education. The faculty share stories about what they are teaching, reminding me that what we do here is essential. And it's support from generous donors like you that makes this possible.

In the student vignettes below, you will see a glimpse of the impact that scholarships have on our students' lives. The Dayton Scholarship has enabled Kateri to enroll while staying involved in and committed to ongoing local work. Elliott, recipient of the Wilys Claire Nelson* ('79) Scholarship, is a local student whose reflections on being LGBTQ+ and Catholic are routinely published by New Ways Ministry, an educational and advocacy platform for LGBTQ+ Catholics and their allies. And finally, Rev. Jontae Hall aspires to serve as an active-duty chaplain in the United States Air Force. The Unitarian-Universalist Scholarship funded by Ruth and John Huss has made this a distinct possibility for Jontae, a father of four.

There are many other students like them for whom scholarships have made a difference. Scholarships are an essential outworking of United's values and mission, funded by recurring gifts to named and endowed scholarships as well as United's operating budget. It is because of your generosity in these areas that United students receive financial support to answer their call and pursue their vocation.

“
Your consistent
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circumstances.

Gifts to United's endowed scholarships afford rural congregational ministers to advance their education while continuing to lead and pastor their churches. Scholarships allow future chaplains, organizational leaders, activists, and government officials to focus on their education without being overwhelmed by financial stressors.

As we have for 62 years, United is committed to meeting pressing needs in our world. Your consistent generosity and steadfast financial support critically enables United students to graduate from seminary and follow their vocational aspirations under the best possible circumstances, minimizing debt.

And gifts to the United Fund, our unrestricted annual fund, sustain our daily operations, supporting a world-class staff and faculty



educating tomorrow's artists, leaders, activists, and ministers.

Transformative theological education serves the common good. Scholarships serve the imminent needs of our students, and with them, meet the needs of our churches, communities, and society-at-large. Your financial support makes real the promise of a just and hopeful future.

We offer you our gratitude and thanks!

Cindi Beth Johnson

Cindi Beth Johnson

Vice President for Advancement

**Deceased*

How to Give

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



Elliott Barnhill

Wilys Claire Nelson
Scholarship Recipient

I am Catholic and am originally from Minneapolis.... I chose United because of its interreligious and non-denominational nature, that it's LGBTQ-friendly, and it's in my hometown. Financial aid has allowed me to attend United.... With the financial aid, I am able to pursue my education and not give up on it.



Rev. Jontae Hall

UU Scholarship (Funded by
Ruth and John Huss) Recipient

Receiving financial aid through this scholarship program has been a massive help for me. I am a single father of four, with one son in college and the other in daycare, and if it had not been for this program, I would not have been able to attend seminary.... I am committed to checking off goal after goal until I can be commissioned into the United States Air Force and begin my career as an active duty chaplain.

STAY CONNECTED

Cindi Beth Johnson

Vice President for Advancement
cbjohnson@unitedseminary.edu
651-255-6137

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New & Noteworthy

DR. JENNIFER MAIDRAND, LOUISVILLE INSTITUTE POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW, JOINS UNITED'S FACULTY

by Diane Riggs

In July, United welcomed to its faculty another Louisville Institute Postdoctoral Fellow—Dr. Jennifer (“Jen”) Maidrand—for its 2024–25 and 2025–26 academic years. Jen, who started her two-year fellowship July 1, is now our Visiting Assistant Professor of Bible, Culture, and Interpretation.

An accomplished scholar, educator, and activist, Jen holds a PhD in Bible and Cultures from Drew University. For her dissertation, “Excavating Promised Land: The Geopolitics of Scripturalization in Palestine-Israel,” she earned the Rabbi Dr. Sheldon J. Weltman Prize

for Excellence in Biblical Studies. Her MA in Theological Studies, also from Drew University, focused on religion and ecology.

Professionally, Jen has served with Global Ministries (UCC) in Palestine and has robust experience working with an array of churches across the US concerning education and advocacy related to the Middle East. She is a member of the United Church of Christ and is committed to fostering interfaith and intercultural community education and dialogue around sacred texts, the earth, and social justice.

Based in Ohio, Jen will teach all of her courses through distance learning and maintain a faculty advisory load. Fortunately, she will also commute to United for key community events (like Fall Convocation) so we can get to know her better.

“Dr. Maidrand brings excellence in biblical studies,” President Molly T. Marshall observed,

“and she connects her scholarship to pressing concerns in our time, e.g., land issues in Israel/Palestine.”

Molly added, “United has a storied history with Louisville Institute Fellows, and our faculty is adept at mentoring emerging professors in theological education. We are grateful to welcome her to this thriving community.”

Welcome, Jen, to our faculty and to the United community!