

SPRING 2026 ISSUE

VOICES

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE TWIN CITIES





A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT REV. MOLLY T. MARSHALL, PhD

Dear Faithful Friends of United,

After a brutal season of Metro Surge in the Twin Cities, we are experiencing the wonder of Spring and the joy of resurrection. Our students, alums, and faculty illumined rank injustice as ICE representatives threatened immigrant neighbors and deported many. The uprising of those committed to standing with the oppressed demonstrated once again the mission of United to prepare compassionate and innovative leaders.

As some of the armed agents departed the cities, the attention of the seminary community turned toward the rigorous work of completing the semester. Dissertations written, theses defended, final papers crafted, made way for the joyous culmination of theological education for our graduates.

We give thanks for these students who have pursued their calling at United, often at great sacrifice. Gifted faculty have devoted themselves to a comprehensive process that includes intellectual, spiritual, and personal formation. Our graduates will make a significant impact for good.

Thank you to all who support our mission. Our work is critical in a time when the common good is under attack. Ethical and spiritually grounded leaders, equipped with the progressive values of United, carry forth practices of justice and peace. They are able to do this because of your faithful giving.

Your investment in the lives of our students is emblematic of your deep commitments. I give thanks for you.

Gratefully,

Molly T. Marshall

Rev. Molly T. Marshall, PhD
President

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ARTIST PROFILE — SHERYL SCHWYHART ('20)

My experience as a student at United began the first day I volunteered in the Arts Department, and it's only gotten more dynamic.

With no formal education in either discipline, I came to art and theology after a 35-year business career. As gallery manager at Textile Center, I met United alums Dawn Carlson Conn ('97, '17) and Kimber Olson ('10).

Kimber invited me to volunteer at an exhibit in 2014, which led me to work with Rev. Dr. Cindi Beth Johnson for several years on United's permanent art collection, curating exhibitions and assisting with arts lunches, a certificate program, and Summer Institute. Auditing some classes to understand the intersections of art and theology quickly mushroomed into full theological study. I am grateful to Cindi Beth, Dr. Jann Cather

TOWARD A WORLD IN NEED: UNITED CELEBRATES 64TH COMMENCEMENT



In a poignant address to the class of 2026, Rev. Dr. Amy Butler, founder of Invested Faith, charged graduates to resist becoming institutional preservationists and to instead turn bravely toward a world in need of transformation. “This is how we change the world,” she said, “by going to the hard places and hanging out in the deep end.” Dr. Butler inspired reflection on the “why” of each alum’s vocation and the transformative purpose of progressive theological education.

Commencement marked the culmination of countless hours of study, praxis, and effort. Dozens of graduates and their supporters, along with faculty, staff, and alums gathered to celebrate a new generation of leaders equipped for the work of justice and peace.

United also had the privilege of honoring three people whose service to the common good has left an indelible mark on United and the world. The inaugural Cindi Beth Johnson Distinguished Service Award, named and endowed by a generous gift from Rev. Dr. Christie Cozad Nueger and Win Nueger, was awarded to its namesake, Rev. Dr. Cindi Beth Johnson, vice president for Advancement, in recognition of her decades of faithful support for United’s mission, vision, and students. In addition, Doctors of Humane Letters (*honoris causa*) were awarded to sisters Jackie Baugh Moore and Julie Strathe Baugh, received on Julie’s behalf by her niece, Katie. President and vice president respectively of the Eula Mae and John Baugh Foundation, the Baugh sisters are champions for justice, ecumenism, and interreligious engagement.

Photos by Michele Jokinen and Nathaniel Green.



Weaver and Dr. Demian Wheeler, and Rev. Phillip Romine ('16, '21) for encouraging me to formally enroll in a degree program.

Theology beyond doctrine was inspiring, and I always came away from class with new answers and even more questions. Theologians like Paul Tillich, John Caputo, and James Cone helped me see the art of Jacob Lawrence, Barbara Hepworth, and Banksy through a different lens, and jazz became a metaphor for how a life of faith can be lived. The more I learned, the more art and theology became inextricably intertwined.

I was becoming a theologian in the field of art—a theopoetian. Rev. Dr. John Thatamanil, our 2025 Commencement speaker, writes that theopoeticians are constructive theologians birthing or retrieving imaginative possibilities, who have an obligation to be obedient to their insistence. This insistence doesn’t call just ministers, chaplains, or professors. It calls artists as well.

Since graduation, I have continued to audit classes and maintained friendships with other alums whose faith praxis includes art. Most recently, I began art practices in abstract

painting and collaborative design of liturgical vestments. It has also been an honor to continue curating exhibitions at United and working with faculty and staff to introduce students to other artists whose work has a theological base.

The cover art, titled *Numinous*, is an acrylic abstraction. The word numinous references the mysteriousness of divine inspiration—the ‘theo’ of theopoetics. This was a personal challenge to release control and just lay down paint to let the numinous image reveal itself.



REV. DR. TIM MCGREGOR ('26) FINDS HOPE FOR HEALING IN EXPLORATORY THEOLOGY

by Diane Riggs

Rev. Dr. Tim McGregor ('26) has been a chaplain, pastor, and church planter for years. How did he find this well-trodden path? Tim says his mother introduced him to Christ. "She was very devout," he explains. Unfortunately, she was also very sick, so Tim spent more time in hospitals than in church as a child. Still, he recalls one incident during communion when he was 11. Tim shares that he "had a very out-of-body experience with the divine while I was in church, and it touched my soul."

Tim grew up and pursued a BA at Tuskegee University. While there, he experienced another out-of-body experience when he was robbed at gunpoint and stabbed. "At that point," he reflects, "I decided to rethink some of my living and some of my decisions. It reignited my spiritual walk."

As he changed the way he lived, Tim felt a spiritual nudge. Others observed that they "saw the calling" on his life. And dreams about preaching began to recur. "Before I ever preached a sermon, I dreamed I was preaching...in the same church where I ended up preaching later on."

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Though Tim identified as National Baptist, he decided to attend Christian Theological Seminary (CTS) in Indiana—a progressive school aligned with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). It helped that Dr. Edward Wheeler, an ordained Baptist minister whom Tim knew when Wheeler worked at Tuskegee, was CTS's president.

During a United chapel service this March, Tim described his experience at CTS as "quite grueling," but also that he "learned a lot." As he clarified more recently, he had to "let go of a very fundamentalist perspective," and that sort of deconstruction was difficult. "It was a crucible situation," Tim asserts.

CHAPLAINING AND CHURCH PLANTING

After earning his MDiv in 2003, Tim spent years in Mississippi and Texas planting churches and working as a hospital chaplain. Since returning to Minnesota, he's been a chaplain at Regions Hospital, Abbott Northwestern, and the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, and pastored at Family Bible Church. He suspects that time he spent with his mother in hospitals likely inclined him toward hospital chaplaincy.

When he decided to pursue a DMin, Tim reviewed his options. Only United, he found, had the interreligious chaplaincy program and liberal ethos that made his MDiv work transformational. Plus, he could attend onsite or online as his schedule allowed. "It was a great benefit," Tim attests, "to do both."

UNITED AND NAT TURNER

Tim credits Dr. Jessica Chapman Lape, former director of the Interreligious Chaplaincy program, with positively shaping his education. Her theological knowledge and emphasis on her African American heritage impressed him. Dr. Munjed Murad's Comparative Theology course elevated Tim's intercultural acuity. Munjed is assistant professor of World Religions and Intercultural Studies, supported by the Johnson-Fry Endowment.

Tim describes his dissertation, "The Exploratory Theology of Nat Turner and Its Effects on African and African American PTSD," as "a labor of love." Why Nat Turner? "I appreciate his passion and his desire to live and fight for the rights of his people," Tim explains, "and his willingness to do so in the name of his religious beliefs." In addition, "I'm always interested in people that... have been misunderstood or written off as villains."

Shepherded with vital support from Rev. Dr. Andrew Packman (assistant professor of Theological Ethics and Formation), Tim's dissertation studies Nat Turner, his traumatic experiences as a slave, and his burgeoning theology. It also traces links to the moral injury, trauma, and PTSD endemic to military service, especially for African American veterans.

Tim wants to "understand more about... how to be an asset to my community." He feels that "United was a really good place for that" and is a rich resource for "clergy... and spiritual caregivers" who are going to help us "keep pressing toward better understandings." Tim is grateful for United's role in honing his academic and spiritual voice.



REV. DR. ANDREW PACKMAN PROMOTED TO TENURE-TRACK POSITION AT UNITED

by Diane Riggs

On Friday, February 13, 2026, Dean Kyle Roberts proudly announced that United's board of trustees had "unanimously affirmed" the faculty's and board's academic committee's recommendations to promote Rev. Dr. Andrew Packman from assistant to associate professor. In addition, the board

concurrently transitioned Andrew from his three-year contract to a tenure-track position.

Andrew joined United in July 2021 as a Louisville Institute Postdoctoral Fellow and Visiting Assistant Professor of Theological Ethics and Practical Theology. At the Spring 2022 Convocation to welcome and bless our new faculty member, Andrew—who

ALUM REV. TODD LIPPERT ('03): LIVING A PUBLIC MINISTRY

by Diane Riggs

As Rev. Todd Lippert was growing up, his life was dominated by two constants: music and church. Both of his parents were music teachers. His dad was the high school choir director, and his mom was the elementary school music teacher. Though his family had been Baptist for generations, they ended up attending a United Church of Christ (UCC) church where his mom was hired to play the organ. It was also much closer to home than the nearest Baptist church.

"I always took Christian faith very seriously," Todd asserts. "The church was a sacred and holy place to me." In seventh grade, Todd remembers talking to his father. "I was at the bottom of the stairs talking to my dad at the top of the stairs. And that was when I said for the first time, 'I wonder if I might want to be a pastor someday.'"

But, Todd adds, "the idea was really terrifying to me," so he put it out of his mind. At the University of Iowa, he pursued a music degree. During a philosophy class toward the end of college, a professed atheist professor began asking some of the same questions about faith that Todd was confronting. "I was wrestling with whether I was a Christian or not."

DECIDING ON SEMINARY

The turning point came one Sunday morning after graduation when Todd and his wife were at church. At the time, he was selling Yellow Pages ads and contemplating an MBA. "I hated it," Todd confesses. "I was miserable." Watching the preacher at First United Methodist Church in Iowa City, he thought, "Maybe I could do that,

holds an MDiv and PhD from the University of Chicago—preached about "The Atmospherics of Theological Education."

In December 2022, as word spread about Andrew's "teaching, mentoring, and other stellar capabilities," United offered him a contract to continue teaching past the terms of his Louisville Fellowship. Since then, Andrew has co-authored an article in *The Oxford Handbook of Friedrich Schleiermacher*, had a paper ("The Consolation of Studying Theology") published in the *Christian Century*,

and maybe I need to pay attention to this call to ministry that keeps bubbling up."

United was the first UCC seminary that came up on the computer, and when Todd visited, "it felt like home for me as soon as I arrived." Since his wife was doing graduate work at the University of Minnesota, they moved to the Twin Cities.

"At United," Todd recalls, "I had the space to figure out how Christianity was meaningful and how this faith fit together for me." Professors who welcomed and encouraged his questions were key to his faith formation, and the "liberation theology that moved through the curriculum, with its focus on justice, was extremely appealing to me."

Todd was also inspired by his classmates. "I saw the student body deeply engaged in the political and social questions of the day." At United from 2000 to 2003, Todd experienced the *Bush v. Gore* lawsuit, 9/11 terror attacks, Minnesota senator Paul Wellstone's tragic death, and the Iraq war launch as he was earning his MDiv.

PUBLIC THEOLOGY

Justice-seeking activism, Todd asserts, "really cemented my understanding that the body of Christ is about bringing the realm of God into being wherever it is. And that was something that would have to make my life better and make my community better."

Since graduating, Todd has worked as a UCC pastor, a Minnesota state legislator (2018–2022), a community organizer with ISAIAH, and a community minister with Creekside Church.

and presented at the September 2025 Schleiermacher Kongress in Kiel, Germany.

In May of 2025, Andrew also led a new initiative, the Formation Pilot Program, to gauge the foundational axis points of students' formation at United. "This is a remarkable moment in theological education," Andrew explained, "where what it means to be a theological learning community is being reimagined in real time. This pilot program is designed to interrogate this question from across the life of the seminary, and to build up our community in the process."



The clergy organizing work during Operation Metro Surge was especially impactful and reconnected him with United. Todd went through "nonviolent direct action training with Dr. Rita Nakashima Brock, one of the authors I read." He also worked with Rev. Dr. Carolyn Pressler, his former Hebrew scripture professor.

United, notes Todd, equipped him "to be able to understand what is going on in our world, and in our communities, and I had the tools to get better and better at that, reading the present through a biblical and theological lens." He is extraordinarily proud of the way the church showed up in Minnesota and grateful for United. "I really want," Todd concludes, "the love-your-neighbor values of the church to be a force in our public life, not an afterthought. I want it to be a force in our political life."

As Andrew shared when he was offered a chance to continue teaching at United past his Louisville Fellowship, "It's such an immense gift to get to do this work, and it's an honor to get to do it with folks like you. I'm so eager to see what we build together!" Now, as a new chapter begins, we are overjoyed that such a prodigiously talented scholar and teacher can continue to journey with our delightfully curious students.



UNITED HONORS JACKIE BAUGH MOORE AND JULIE STRATHE BAUGH WITH DOCTORS OF HUMANE LETTERS (*HONORIS CAUSA*)

by Nathaniel Green

In celebration of their leadership in social justice, ecumenism, and interreligious engagement, United—with unanimous support from its faculty and board of trustees—conferred Doctors of Humane Letters (*honoris causa*) upon sisters Jackie Baugh Moore, President of the Eula Mae and John Baugh Foundation, and Julie Strathe Baugh, Vice President, during its 64th Commencement Exercises on April 26.

The faculty noted that the values guiding the family’s foundation are closely aligned with United’s inclusive values. The Board approved the recommendation of the faculty at its November meeting.

The Baugh Foundation has awarded tens of millions of dollars to organizations that share its Baptist ethos and tradition. Jackie and Julie are the daughters of Barbara “Babs” Baugh—the daughter of John and Eula Mae—who became president of the Foundation in 2007. After Babs died in 2020, Jackie was appointed president, and Julie became vice president.

Both sisters serve in roles outside the Foundation that reflect their interests and the

Foundation’s long-standing connections to prominent Baptist institutions. Jackie has served on the Baptist Joint Committee, the board of Baptist News Global, as a trustee of Mercer University, and was named as the 2025 Distinguished Alumni by the Baylor Line Foundation, an independent alumni association. Julie is chair of the board of the Interfaith Alliance, has served on the Strategic Advisory Board for Good Faith Media, and was also an executive board member for Perkins School of Theology.

As leaders of the Baugh Foundation, Julie and Jackie have sharpened the organization’s progressive vision and funding priorities, directing grants toward justice, inclusion, and equity initiatives. The Foundation prioritizes nonprofits working in six categories: meeting basic human needs, faith-based higher education, inclusivity initiatives, social justice and advocacy, arts and enrichment, and faith-based journalism.

At times, their support for progressive causes has faced resistance. In 2025, Baylor University rescinded a Baugh Foundation grant awarded to the Center for Church and Community. The funds supported evidence-based research into the impacts of disenfranchisement of women and LGBTQ+ people in congregations in an effort to “nurture institutional courage and foster change.” In a statement, the Foundation decried the University’s decision and asserted that the decision “disserves Baylor students, faculty, and the broader Christian community.” The Foundation also reaffirmed

its “commitment to supporting progressive, inclusive, and justice-oriented work.”

While proudly Baptist in its heritage, the Baugh Foundation shares with United a steadfast dedication to social justice, ecumenism, and interreligious engagement. The Foundation’s belief in the transformative potential of theological education has extended to the seminary through its support of United’s contextual education programs and, more recently, endowed scholarships.

Decades of substantive work by myriad organizations, academic institutions, and progressive initiatives can be credited to The Foundation’s material contributions to the common good. This is owed no doubt to Jackie and Julie’s faithful stewardship of the Foundation’s mission and the path paved by their forebears.

SUPPORT A RIGOROUS EDUCATION FOR THE NEXT GENERATION WITH A legacy gift.

To learn more, contact Rev. Dr. Cindi Beth Johnson at 651.255.6137 or cbjohnson@unitedseminary.edu.



DR. GINGER MORGAN ANNOUNCED AS ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND PROGRAM DIRECTOR FOR INTERRELIGIOUS CHAPLAINCY

by Nathaniel Green

On April 16, United shared the exciting news that Dr. Ginger Morgan will join its faculty as the new associate professor for Pastoral and Spiritual Care and Program Director for Interreligious Chaplaincy. Dr. Morgan is concluding her role at the Presbyterian Student Center Foundation in

Madison, Wisconsin, as director of Candid and Community Initiatives. She is a highly qualified program director and chaplain with experience in healthcare, campus ministry, and higher education. With a PhD in Religion and Psychological Studies from Iliff School of Theology at the University of Denver, as well as a Master of Theological Studies (MTS) from Vanderbilt Divinity School, Dr. Morgan draws

A MESSAGE FROM ADVANCEMENT REV. DR. CINDI BETH JOHNSON

United graduates have an impact on United in countless ways. President Molly T. Marshall notes that they are, in fact, our letters of recommendation. They embody the educational experience they had at United in the work that they pursue, in how they live out their faith tradition, and in the impact that they have in the world.

We see this in myriad ways. There is the alum who is a recurring donor and the alum who creates a legacy gift to support future students. There is the alum who introduces President Marshall to a new donor. And there is the alum who sees in another person an interest in theological education and encourages them to pursue a degree at United.

Recently, we have seen up close the impact of the work of Rev. Jennifer Jaimez ('98). Jennifer's first call was to St. Mark's UCC in Bloomington, Minnesota, which was founded in 1954. Jennifer served at St. Mark's for 28 years, and like other pastors, she had a significant influence on members and the broader community.

St. Mark's also had an impact on United. During the course of Jennifer's ministry, eight students from United completed nine-month internships at St. Mark's. As interns, these students were part of a learning community that helped them hone their skills in teaching, preaching, counseling, and administration. The congregation, along with Jennifer, mentored and encouraged them. They have all gone

from her theological and multidisciplinary education in her work.

Interreligious studies is one of United's four pillars, and the Interreligious Chaplaincy (IRC) program—unique among peer institutions—constitutes the largest and fastest-growing of the seminary's programs over the past five years. In alignment with United's ethos, Dr. Morgan is a gifted scholar of religious pluralism, highly educated in progressive theological education, and foregrounds justice in chaplaincy and pastoral care.

on to do a multitude of things: serving in nonprofits, rural churches, city churches, and more. St. Mark's investment in United students had a significant impact.

Like many congregations, the pandemic was difficult for St. Mark's. Three years ago, they made the painful decision to complete their ministry and intentionally repurpose their assets while it was still their choice.

In addition to supporting the Minnesota Conference UCC and the Bloomington Housing and Redevelopment Authority, they made a significant gift to United. A relationship that began with mentoring interns grew into a newly endowed UCC scholarship.

The St. Mark's endowed scholarship will provide financial support for UCC students who wish to attend seminary. This gift creates an enduring legacy for St. Mark's and will provide support for future students. As the gift was announced, their moderator, Cindy Russell, said, "This gift will defray the cost of seminary education. Support for future leaders of the church remains important as the church continues to evolve into new ways of being the church."

This spring, we have been blessed to establish several new endowed scholarships in addition to the one from St. Mark's. Estate gifts from Joanne* ('82) and Thomas* Rohrict, and Elden* (Yankon, '55) and Norma* Zuern have created a lasting legacy and investment in United. A recent gift from George (Mission House, '55)

Dr. Morgan's career also reflects her personal experiences and identity. Writing to the search committee, she shared, "My formation includes reconciling my lesbian identity with my faith and living as a religious minority in India during high school, both of which shaped my intercultural perspective and vocational commitments." She continued, "Throughout my career, I have sought to create inclusive spaces of belonging, whether supporting LGBTQIA+ students, young adults in recovery from addiction, or building programs attentive to justice and equity."



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The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.
—Frederick Buechner

and Joyce Schowalter will allow them to see, while they are living, the impact of scholarship support.

Currently, 57 percent of scholarships are covered by generous gifts and endowed scholarships. The other 43 percent is paid out of United's annual budget. Each scholarship gift, each new endowed scholarship, or gift to an already endowed scholarship, helps us expand offerings to our students. We don't want financial limitations to become a barrier for students who feel called to attend United.

Your scholarship gifts supported Jennifer while she was a student. Her experience at United, along with the skills she has learned along the way, helped her shepherd St. Mark's for more than two decades and through the difficult decision to complete their ministry. Your gifts to United continue to make this happen. We give thanks for the lasting legacies created by these and many other faithful donors.

With gratitude,

Rev. Dr. Cindi Beth Johnson
Vice President for Advancement

President Molly T. Marshall, reflects, "United welcomes Dr. Ginger Morgan with confidence and great enthusiasm. Her varied leadership roles, especially in chaplaincy, equip her uniquely to lead our robust IRC program and to teach pastoral and spiritual care."

After a months-long faculty search and on-site candidate lecture, being recommended by a unanimous faculty vote, and gaining approval from the Board of Trustees' Academic Committee, Dr. Morgan will officially begin on July 1. Students, faculty, and staff are eager to welcome her to United.

STAY CONNECTED

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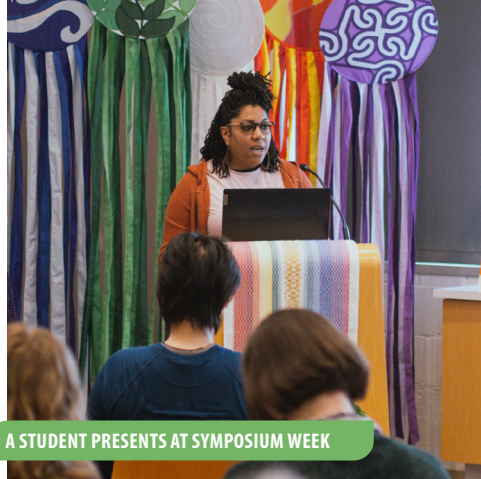
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A STUDENT PRESENTS AT SYMPOSIUM WEEK



PRESIDENT MARSHALL WITH DR. ELLEN ARMOUR



STUDENTS LAID OUT PROTEST SIGNS AROUND THE CHAPEL DURING SYMPOSIUM WEEK