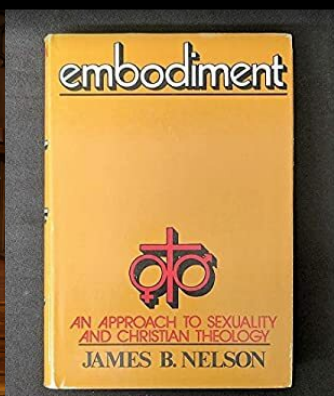
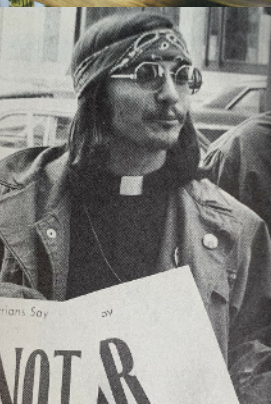


FALL 2022

VOICES

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE TWIN CITIES



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



Dear Faithful Friend of United,

The fall term has begun and United is enjoying record enrollment, a new professor in World Religions and Intercultural Studies, and the kick-off of our 60th anniversary as a seminary. We give thanks for all who went before us, whose legacy we now hold in trust even as we write new chapters in the treasured story of this remarkable school.

It pleases me to say that amidst the welter of concerns theological schools are facing, United is positioned quite well. We are a growing school, a vibrant school, and an innovative school. More than ever before, the world needs a seminary like United because we focus on today's most important questions and urgent needs.

Why is United growing? Let me simply list a few of the reasons.

- We have a curriculum that speaks to our time.
- We imagine new programs to engage our call to enact justice.
- We continue to care about the church and seek to be a source of renewal for it.
- We have a winsome and gifted faculty.
- We are accessible through virtual learning delivery.
- We are student-centered, caring deeply about the formation of each.
- We are well-governed by a board that continues to tend the well-being of the seminary.
- We strive to become the beloved community in all our practices.

We are a seminary focused on the future. We have thoughtfully positioned the seminary theologically in a post-Christendom, religiously plural context. While continuing our historic identity as a progressive Christian seminary anchored in the United Church of Christ, we readily welcome those of other faiths who seek spiritual grounding for vocations of service.

I invite you to participate in the array of events this school year at United. We will cherish your presence as you add to the story United is writing in this anniversary year.

Gratefully,

Molly T. Marshall

Molly T. Marshall
President



"More than ever before, the world needs a seminary like United because we focus on today's most important questions and urgent needs."

GUSTAFSON LECTURESHIP IN NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

Rev. Dr. Angela Parker | "Catching God's Breath in the Age of #BlackLivesMatter"

On Monday, October 24, United was joined by Rev. Dr. Angela N. Parker for the annual Gustafson Lecture in New Testament Studies. In her research, Dr. Parker, assistant professor of New Testament and Greek at McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University, merges Womanist thought and postcolonial theory while reading biblical texts. Dr. Parker spoke on the subject of her recently published book, *If God Still Breathes, Why Can't I? Black Lives Matter and Biblical Authority*.

The Gustafson Lectureship was established to honor Henry A. Gustafson, Emeritus Professor of New Testament Theology at United. *View the lecture: <https://bit.ly/GustafsonUnited>*



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF UNITED'S CHAPLAIN

By Diane Riggs

“United is a place where spirit is moving,” observed Rev. Nikki Darlene Frontz this spring when she stepped into her new role as seminary chaplain. In the intervening months, Nikki has been getting acquainted with United's students and faculty, and settling into a schedule of sorts. In this critical role, Nikki provides the spiritual care and support necessary to sustain United students as they learn to lead, tend to the hearts of others, and explore deep theological questions.

Starting the Day with Intention

When asked how we start our days, most of us would mumble something about coffee and showering and running late. However, Nikki says, “My day starts off with an intentional moment.”

She goes on to say, “I like to just stop for a minute and rest in gratitude. I am grateful to be here, grateful for this day (because it wasn't promised to any of us), and grateful to be of service to the community at United.”

On her office window, Nikki has a passage of scripture, 1 Corinthians 16:14, which reads, “Let all that you do be done in love.” This, she says, helps remind her every day that “it's important *how* I do things and *how* I communicate, not just what I do and say.”

Chapel and Student Support

As pastor of Solomon's Porch in Minneapolis and a former Air Force chaplain's assistant, Nikki brings ministerial experience to organize chapel services, provide pastoral care, and offer support and resources. The key, as Nikki plans for chapel and offers care, is to “be in alignment with who we say we are in the community.”

For example, in June Nikki—in collaboration with Assistant Professor of Christian Ethics and Social Transformation Justin Sabia-Tanis—hosted a Pride Chapel. Decorations celebrated those who fought against oppression, including youth involved in the Stonewall riots of 1969, and Sabia-Tanis delivered the chapel sermon. The chosen hymn, “Dear Friends, Queer Friends,” was sung in a traditional round.

The cookies and coloring chapel, by contrast, was intended to help students embrace, as Nikki describes it, “the spiritual practice of rest and creativity, of being in community together, of resting together, and engaging in the meditative practice of just coloring.” She adds, “Our community, our world is tired. Come and rest.”

Nikki provides individual support in person, over the phone, and online over Zoom.



Rest and Recovery

Just as she starts the day, Nikki ends the day with playful moments. She and her husband, who's currently a seminarian, turn off their phones and simply converse during dinner.

“We're very intentional,” she explains, “about keeping our home as a sacred space, a place of love and of peace. It is a place to rest and recharge.”

She recommends that students and others at United make room for the spiritual practice of nurturing family relationships. We humans inevitably fail at times, but how, Nikki asks, “Do you get back up?” That's the challenge of this life and time and part of what it takes to be a chaplain at United.

ANTI-RACISM INITIATIVES LAUNCHED AT UNITED

As an educational institution that has long championed social justice, United announced in July the creation of a new position, Director of Anti-Racist Initiatives, held by Rev. Dr. Gary F. Green II. Gary also serves as assistant professor of pastoral theology and social transformation.

Gary will work with and support United's BIPOC students, consult with United's leadership about cultivating an anti-racist ethos throughout the seminary and beyond, collaborate with and advise faculty, and serve as the perpetual chair of the seminary's Committee Advocating for Racial Justice (CARJ). He will also continue to develop and expand his series, *Disrupting White Supremacy*, for United and the public. *Read the full announcement: bit.ly/antiracismunited*



BUILDING COMMUNITY AT UNITED & FINDING THE THROUGH LINES

By Diane Riggs

At United, a supportive community of beloved students and faculty is an integral part of the educational journey for future faith leaders. Since coming to seminary and charting a path toward chaplaincy, dual degree student Bridgette Weber has not only been elected to the Student Leadership Collective, she has also worked with another student to support and sustain United students with Sunday evening United Family Dinners.

The potlucks, a traditional staple of church fellowship, provide an intentional and safe space for students—and even regular guest President Molly T. Marshall—to share in good food and to nurture relationships. The meals are also a centering time to reflect on the values many students hold dear: creation care and sustainability for the planet.

“Right now, it’s a sacred place for us to experiment with how food brings us into conversation with the land and our history,” says Bridgette (MDiv, Interreligious Chaplaincy; MAL, Social Transformation).

This focus on food as a way to minister to each other and to the earth has been a calling for Bridgette since she was raised in rural Wisconsin.

Working toward United & Social Justice Ministry

Bridgette attended the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh where she earned a bachelor’s degree in Environmental Studies. During college, Bridgette also found her

“passion for building vibrant communities with food at the center.”

While studying biology and ecology, Bridgette worked as a farmer and chef, managed Trust Local Foods, market managed Sustainable Living Roadshow, and founded the Oshkosh Food Cooperative. After college, she worked at Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Madison, a grassroots social transformation effort based in Sri Lanka.

All the while, she says, the idea of a vital ministry around food and sustainability kept arising in her mind. When she found United online and discovered the seminary offered an MDiv in Social Transformation, “there was no doubt,” she states, “that it was a huge, cosmic, universal, divine YES happening inside of me.” At United she was able to follow her distinctive call to social justice ministry.

“My ministry work is related to the sacredness in food,” Bridgette says. “I advocate for the role that food plays in our spiritual and religious lives. The underlying reason is that, not only do I personally see that food is a sacred intersection between our relationship to the web of life (the land, the water, each other, our quality of relationship, etc.), but I also see how this message or reality has been inverted through colonization and racism.”

In her academic work, as well as at the dinners, Bridgette has developed a “food sovereignty ethic for the beloved community.” This ethic “is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to



define their own food and agriculture systems.”

“I think food sovereignty has the power to heal many of our divides,” she asserts, “and social transformation can be nutritious, delicious, and exciting!”

The Path Forward

United has allowed Bridgette to do this deep work because it “is a place where I can explore the multitude of who I am.” The process, though challenging, has also enabled Bridgette to lay bare her roots and start to reconcile the past with her goals for the future. The through lines of food and justice make possible the plan to bring the leadership and ministry skills she’s gained at United back to the rural areas she left years ago.

“I want unity and connection, and know that building these types of relationships will take care and time and attention. Joy and creative potential are just waiting for us,” she says.

2022 DISTINGUISHED ALUM | REV. JOHN AESCHBURY ('85)

On September 28, United formally honored Rev. John Aeschbury ('85) as its 2022 Distinguished Alum. The current executive director of the DART Center (Direct Action Research Training), John has spent more than 30 years organizing clergy and lay leaders to help them actualize the call to do justice.

DART is rooted in diverse faith traditions and trains community leaders and professional organizers to build power and take direct action on problems facing their communities, so that all people are treated with the respect and dignity that various faith traditions tell us they deserve. Congregations learn to advocate for justice and policy changes on the local and statewide level.

Reflecting on the work of DART in Florida, alums Revs. Judy ('86) and Brian ('96) Bagley-Bonner write, “DART is doing an inspiring and powerfully effective job of 'doing justice.'” Judy and Brian’s church was a founding member of

REV. DAMEN JENSEN-HEITMANN ('09) BALANCES BREWING AND MINISTRY

By Diane Riggs

At Steeple Brewing Co. in Hastings, Nebraska, you will find an interesting selection of theologically-themed beer options. There is Skip the Last Verse Hefeweizen, Fellowship Hour Coffee Stout, Parking Lot Meeting Amber Ale, and Bats in the Belfry Nutty Brown Ale. The beers, complete with full back stories, are themes drawn from Pastor Damen Jensen-Heitmann's time growing up in and pastoring at small town churches.

To hear him talk, Damen (M.Div. '09) has had pastoral aspirations since he was confirmed in the Trinity United Church of Christ. He grew up in a small Iowa town and remembers that his church family helped him to feel cared for and supported. Decades later, he is the one offering care—both as a pastor and the co-owner of Steeple Brewing.

Facing the Challenges of the Pandemic

Since Damen and his two business partners opened Steeple Brewing Co. in 2017, a lot has changed. The COVID-19 pandemic radically altered life. Fortunately, Damen is now a full-time associate pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Hastings, and Steeple Brewing Co. is still in operation.

During COVID, there was the issue of how to “get the product to the people,” as Damen puts it. Happily, he adds, the “church and brewery were beneficiaries of strong community spirit and abundant energy around problem-solving.”

Creativity gave rise to new methods of serving congregants and patrons.

There were church services on Zoom, and the church organized outdoor worship services and found other ways—including regular podcasts—to reach out. The brewery switched to carry-out sales of crawlers and growlers and scheduled delivery nights in surrounding towns.

Finding A Balance

Steeple Brewing also gives Damen a chance to practice self-care. On a brewing day, he goes in around 5:00 a.m. and enjoys the quiet solitude of brewing until noon or so. It's a set time when he can engage in what he describes as a “more *tangible* form of creativity” than his usual work.

Ministry, by contrast, is more of an ongoing “faith life journey.” And while each sermon and youth lesson may be tuned to current life realities, they are all still part of an inclusive rubric of faith and pastoring.

How has United helped prepare him for his unique ministry—serving parishioners and brew pub patrons? “One of the biggest ways United prepared me for ministry,” Damen states, “was by instilling in me a deeply held conviction to hold the perspectives of others and experiences of others in high regard.”

He continues, “It has a lot to do with building community. To survive as



humans, we must learn how to relate to one another, perceive one another, and help one another. That is a big part of pastoring a congregation. How do we facilitate a healthy, loving, peaceful community within the church? And then, how do we carry that outside the church walls? How do our members embrace others in the community and foster kind and loving relationships outside of church?”

The opening lines of the Steeple Brewing Philosophy statement suggest this idea of community most succinctly: “What is a beer? A beer is an invitation. It's a call to community. It is an opportunity to share just a few moments of life with one another.... A beer is a reminder that life is to be shared; that we are asked to care for one another.”

Read more about Damen's interesting vocational path on United's blog at: bit.ly/brewingminister

the DART affiliate in Manatee County, Florida. They write, “We watched DART stretch the perspectives of our congregants, light them with the flame of justice, and change unjust policies in Manatee County.”

Dr. Walter Brueggemann, Professor Emeritus at Columbia Theological Seminary, writes in his recommendation letter: “John Aseschbury is a community organizer of the first rank. He has found effective ways to translate our common passion for social justice into concrete community-based transformative action.... He is, of course, a person of high integrity, deep faith, and honest conviction, all marks that make him a winsome candidate for the award. In honoring John, the seminary will surely bring honor to itself. I commend him for this award with immense enthusiasm.”



MEANINGFUL INTERSECTIONS SPARK LEGACY GIVING

By Diane Riggs

Legacy donors all have unique stories. Some are led to a legacy gift through a generational family connection. Others, like Kenneth Daniel (M.Div. '81), predicate their legacy gifts upon lived experiences that fundamentally transform their life and ministry.

It was a United alum, Ken remembers, who had a significant impact on his 15-year-old self. Rev. Roger LaWarre ('69) was the associate pastor and youth minister in Allentown, Pennsylvania where Ken's family attended.

"He believed in us," Ken recalls, "and our ability to become leaders, to engage in social action, and to understand how the church can influence public policy like the Vietnam war, conservation, racial justice, and women's rights."

With Roger, Ken continues, "The youth felt a new vitality, an excitement, a place to engage our faith and learn." Ken, in turn, was inspired to serve on the church board as a youth representative, got involved in the Penn Northeast Conference youth, and went with Roger on congregation-sponsored mission trips. From that time on, Ken asserts, "United has been the foremost shaping influence in my personal and professional life."

Scholarship at United

Ken enrolled at United in 1977. Rev. Dr. James B. Nelson was his ethics professor and kindled Ken's ongoing applied interest in ethics. He has incorporated ethics initiatives into his work as a nursing home administrator and nonprofit executive.

"Rev. Dr. Art Merrill and Rev. Dr. Henry Gustafson were amazing professors," Ken adds, "who could open an almost mystical understanding of the Bible, informed by scholarship, that has become a continuing interest throughout my life." Rev. Dr. Wilson Yates was another key influence. Ken can remember "struggling with the intense rigorous coursework in Old Testament and theology." After he took Yates' Theology and Art class, "somehow it began to make sense."

Rev. Dr. Clyde Steckel's classes on theology and psychology influenced Ken's decision to pursue a master's in pastoral counseling. He also credits Rev. Dr. Lance Barker, his thesis advisor, for helping him to round out his education with real life experience interning as a youth minister.

As Ken sums it up, United "taught me how to read the Bible, analyze social conditions, and take ethical actions aligned with my faith." He also credits the school for its role in teaching leadership and "how to adapt and make positive change."

The Ongoing Legacy

The constancy of United, Ken contends, is "the rigorous academic foundation and the motivation to engage at the intersection of life and faith, church and society, and action and reflection." He believes that this legacy of United has shaped his life and ministry to the greatest extent. The legacy, he adds, "for empowering change agents, creating ethical engagement, and building a more just, inclusive, and equitable society are hallmarks of the school's influence."



Ken ('81) and Barbara Daniels

By including United in his will, Ken will enable future students to access the transformative experience that a United education provides. "Our giving," he states, "will be one small acknowledgment of the major effect United had on my life."

SUPPORT THE NEXT GENERATION OF FAITH LEADERS

When you leave a legacy gift to United, you ensure a rigorous education for the next generation of ethical faith leaders—leaders the world needs.

For more information about Legacy Giving and membership in the Barnabas Society, contact Cindy Schriever, United's donor engagement officer. She can be reached 651-255-6111 or cschriever@unitedseminary.edu.



Rev. Theophous Reagans

UNITED STUDENT RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

Scholarships provide our students the financial support they need to graduate from seminary without the added burden of debt. United students receive scholarships from the seminary and through outside groups. One of those groups is the Hawkinson Fund for Peace and Justice at Grace University Lutheran Church in Minneapolis.

For the past 30 years, Rev. Eric Hucke ('73) has helped coordinate disbursement of these scholarships, given to students who have shown outstanding commitment to peace and justice. Since its inception, five United students have received these awards including: Nancy Anderson ('89); Casey Vanderbent ('98); Matthew Bersagel-Braley ('03); Leslie Ball ('05); and Karen Van Fossan ('12).

A MESSAGE FROM ADVANCEMENT

REV. DR. CINDI BETH JOHNSON, VICE PRESIDENT

60 YEARS OF FAITHFUL GIVING | INTRODUCING THE UNITED FUND

Sixty years ago on September 27, 1962, 50 students and 10 faculty members began a bold venture in theological education known as United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. The intent was to find a new way to educate persons for ministry in a changing world. Sixty years later, we are continuing to do this important work. Your support has made this possible.

Our theme for this year is *Many Voices United*. We are celebrating United at 60. As we move through this year, I invite you to recall the voices that encouraged or inspired you. Perhaps it was a classmate, a professor, or a guest speaker.

For me, it includes a long list of beloved colleagues, past and present. I also think of artist Wing Young Huie, Walter Mondale, William Cope Moyers, and Alika Galloway. I think of the voices of students and alums, for they are the reason for United's mission: to prepare innovative and compassionate leaders for the equipping of churches, other faith communities, and society toward justice and peace.

Anniversaries invite the opportunity to look back and to look forward. In this 60th year we are excited to announce a new name for the Annual Fund. Going forward, the Annual Fund will be known as the **United Fund**. The **United Fund** will continue to provide unrestricted operating support that allows us to live out our mission.

Why the new name? To remind us we are many voices, **united**. The United Fund is the backbone of our financial support (student aid, retaining and attracting stellar faculty, library resources, building costs, etc.). I look forward to sharing more with you about the United Fund in the coming weeks.

As we move through this 60th year, we are grateful for your voice. Whether you have been a supporter for six months, six years, or 60 years, the impact of your faithful generosity makes the difference in the lives of our students who, in turn, change the world.

CELEBRATING UNITED AT 60

At the end of September, United hosted a 60th anniversary kick-off event, including worship led by Rev. Elizabeth Macaulay ('99); recognition of the 2022 Distinguished Alum Rev. John Aeschbury ('85); conversations with faculty past and present; and a time to be together.

Stay tuned for additional information about anniversary events, including a final celebration in the spring!

Photos by Registrar Hillary Vamstad



This year, Doctor of Ministry student Rev. Theophous Reagans will receive this prestigious scholarship. Reagans is an active member of Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland, California. He serves as the Minister to Global Missions, for which he has coordinated several mission trips to serve children and youth in South Africa. He has also done chaplaincy work at the church and in prison ministry, among other roles as a church leader.

Rev. J. Alfred Smith, Sr., Pastor Emeritus of Allen Temple Baptist Church and Professor Emeritus Berkeley School of Theology says of Theophous: "I dare say that few Black churches are actually engaging in a continuing ministry of service to youth and young adults in the U.S. and in Africa, teaching them to work for social justice under the banner of Black Liberation theology. I applaud his quiet, unassuming leadership, that seeks no recognition or publicity but simply seeks to be obedient to God's call, commission, and claim on his life. This ministry is not missionary paternalism rather, it is a healthy bilateral partnership."

United congratulates Rev. Reagans on this award and for the important ministry he is doing. And we are grateful for alums like Rev. Eric Hucke and organizations like the Hawkinson Fund for Peace and Justice who provide financial support for our students.

STAY CONNECTED WITH UNITED

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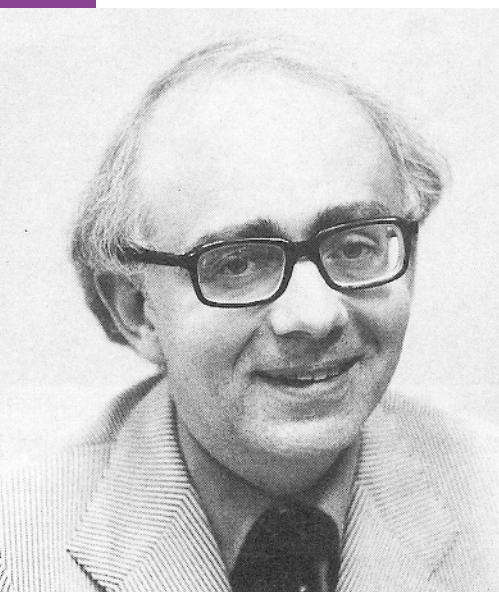
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IN MEMORIAM | REV. DR. LANCE BARKER, PROFESSOR EMERITUS



Rev. Dr. Lance Richard Barker died August 9, 2022. He was a graduate of the University of Wyoming, San Francisco Theological Seminary, and the University of Chicago Divinity School. His doctoral dissertation, "A Study of the Impact of the Detroit Industrial Mission," helped Lance understand the relationship of the church to the urban community.

After teaching at United for more than 30 years, Lance retired as Professor Emeritus of Church and Economic Life in 2001. He was the first person to sit in the Schilling in Church and Economic Life chair, and mentored countless students, influencing them while they were in the classroom and preparing them for the communities in which they would serve. Reflecting on his death, alums talked about Lance as a "favorite" professor, a "wise and gentle soul," "interesting, interested, and helpful."

Lance's colleagues reflected on the gifts that they received, working with Lance, "a wonderful colleague," "a bright spirit," "deeply caring," "someone with a great sense of humor." His writing and traveling partner, Rev. Dr. Ed Martin, United's Professor Emeritus of Contextual and Historical Studies, writes "It is a rarity to find someone with whom one can work over a long period of time in a purely collaborative way. We inspired each other and stimulated each other to do our best work."

Together, Lance and Ed visited rural churches across the United States and parts of Canada, studying alternative forms of ministry. Funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc., their research led to the publication of *Multiple Paths to Ministry, New Models for Theological Education*. In honor of Dean and Elsie Freudenberger, Lance also co-edited *Abundant Harvest, Essays on Rural Life and Ministry* with Victor Klimoski in 2002.

Lance is survived by his wife, Gail, and many family, friends, and colleagues who mourn his loss. Memorial suggestions: Valley Presbyterian Church, 2800 S. Camino Del Sol, Green Valley, AZ 85622; United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, 767 Eustis Street, Suite #140, St. Paul, MN 55114; or the Parkinson's Foundation.

Of his death, President Molly T. Marshall writes, "A theological school is only as strong as its faculty. Rev. Dr. Lance Barker offered his life in distinguished service in the formation of gifted leaders at United. We grieve his death, and as Revelation 14:13 says, "Blessed are they who die in the Lord." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them." Blessed be the memory of Lance Barker.