



Report of the Dean of North Park Theological Seminary

1. PROGRAM UPDATE

- a. We continue to collaborate with President Tammy Swanson-Draheim, conference superintendents, and conference staff members to expand the Ignite and Equip model to more Covenant students.
- b. Work continues to advance Next, an initiative started by our Contextual and Lifelong Learning (CALL) leadership (Bret Widman and Cheryl Lynn Cain). Next encompasses a range of educational initiatives with NPTS faculty providing content for churches, conferences, and other groups.
- c. We are close to finalizing an agreement with Midtown Church in the Pacific Southwest Conference to offer a certificate in urban church planting/ministry.
- d. Conversations continue with North Park provost Michael Carr and his designees regarding the reimagined Bible/Christian Studies/Theology degree. The most recent discussions centered on a possible 3 + 2 degree with students earning a BA and MDiv (or perhaps MACF) in five years.
- e. We still hope to formalize an agreement with the Charles H. Mason Seminary of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) to send us students in the Chicagoland area (talks slowed down as the president of Mason Seminary was out of the country for a time).

2. SCHOOL OF RESTORATIVE ARTS

- a. Although teaching continues at Stateville and Logan Correctional centers, the recent announcement from Governor Pritzker that both Stateville and Logan will close for renovations means we are planning to move our work with men to Illinois River Correctional Center. We do not plan to launch a second cohort at Logan at this time.
- b. Our plans continue to develop a new Center for Restorative Justice (modeled, to a degree, on our Weborg Center for Spiritual Direction) that will encompass the work of the School of Restorative Arts. This center will offer certificates in restorative justice practices for both inside and outside students (at the Illinois River Correctional Center).

- c. We have decided to suspend offering the MA in Christian ministry and restorative arts degree as it is more financially sustainable to offer certificates through the Center for Restorative Justice. We do hope, however, to find ways in the future to make the MARJM viable for inside and outside students at some point.
- d. We have already been in communication with LMDJ of the Covenant and the NPU Center for Civic Engagement to consider potential partnerships for the Center for Restorative Justice.

3. FACULTY AND STAFF UPDATE

- a. We are excited to announce that Dr. Sophia Magallanes-Tsang will be joining NPTS as assistant professor of Old Testament. Her PhD is from the University of Edinburgh. She has taught college and seminary courses in both Old and New Testaments since 2007 and has held full-time teaching positions at Life Pacific University (2014-2020) and Fresno Pacific University (2022-2024). She also has taught for Fuller Theological Seminary in both English and Spanish.
- b. We officially installed the following faculty members into endowed chair positions:
 - i. Michelle Dodson (Milton B. Engebretson Chair in Evangelism and Justice)
 - ii. Hauna Ondrey (Wilma Peterson Chair in Church History)
 - iii. Max Lee (Paul W. Brandel Chair in Biblical Studies)
- c. Dr. J. Nate Clayton was promoted to associate professor of Old Testament with tenure with approval from the Board of Trustees in May 2024.
- d. Dr. Brett Widman will be on sabbatical summer 2025.
- e. Grace Herrera, formerly of NPU's Human Resources Department, joined us on March 4, 2024, as interim director of seminary operations. I continue to work with NPTS staff and NPU leadership (i.e., the HR director and the Senior Cabinet) regarding our staffing needs.

4. FUNDRAISING AND GRANTS

- a. The Lilly Endowment Thriving in Ministry grant concluded at the end of 2023. We do have a \$450,000 Lilly Endowment Sustainability Grant that requires matching funds.
- b. We continue with the Lilly Pathways Phase 2 grant.
- c. We are working closely with Renee Cox and Chris Bakker of NPU's Finance Office on both grant initiatives.

5. SYMPOSIUM AND LECTURES

- a. The Symposium on the Theological Interpretation of Scripture took place September 22-23, 2023, in person on North Park's campus and was also streamed online for registered participants. The theme was "Creation Care: Biblical Foundations and Practical Implications" and featured prominent scholars from around the world.
- b. Our Public Theology lecture series consisted of lectures in Fall 2023 and Spring 2024, with the title of our 2023-24 public theology series, "Humility as a Prophetic Practice," drawn from my book, *Humility Illuminated*.
 - i. "Shepherding, Reconciling, and Ministering: Humility in Pastoral Practice" (October 25, 2023)
 - ii. "I Could Be Wrong," exploring the topic of cultural humility (March 6, 2024). More information is posted on the seminary website.
- c. I presented a lecture, "Power and Humility in Theological Education," at the Henry Center at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School on February 22, 2024.

6. CHURCH RELATIONS

I continue to receive invitations to preach and teach in various locations. It is important to note that several engagements are outside the Covenant and help us to foster new connections.

Recent and upcoming engagements include:

- a. Batavia Covenant Church, Batavia, Illinois (February 11)
- b. Resurrection Covenant Church, Boise, Idaho (February 25)
- c. Faith and Race Conference at Radiant Covenant Church, Renton, Washington (February 16-18)
- d. Alaska Conference Annual Meeting (April 10-13)
- e. Sanctuary Covenant Church, Columbus, Ohio (April 19-20)
- f. East Coast Conference Annual Meeting (April 26-27)
- g. Central Conference Annual Meeting (May 2)
- h. Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia (July 15-19)
- i. Brethren in Christ's Great Lake Conference Pastors Retreat (September 26-28)
- j. Mennonite Church USA's Mosaic Conference Annual Meeting (November 1-3)