



**United
Lutheran
Seminary**

UNITED LUTHERAN SEMINARY **Unifying, Learning, Serving**

United Lutheran Seminary continues to build and sustain an affirming and diverse learning community of faithful, well-educated leaders skilled at guiding grace-filled encounters. Deeply rooted in the history of Lutheranism within Christianity, we witness to and participate in the work of God in the world through spiritual leadership and accompaniment, public advocacy, impactful worship, and care of neighbor.

In three years, we will be observing the bicentennial of our origins when Samuel Simon Schmucker founded the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg in part because it's bucolic setting would ensure a place of study and contemplation free from the distractions of the world. Of course, our national narrative put an abrupt end to that concept in 1863, and shortly thereafter C.P. Krauth felt that the center of Lutheran theological learning would be better off in the growing city of Philadelphia. After 154 years and several failed attempts, the two campuses were re-united under the banner of United. This word is a lofty aspirational sentiment, given the fractious world in which we find ourselves.

The church of Christ is struggling to be seen against a backdrop of political drama and escalating tensions over our history, our climate, and our future. Nevertheless, it is a good time to be the church. It is a good time to be United under the banner of God's intended formation for all of us. The seminary has adapted quickly to the world emerging from Covid, providing new technologies and learning platforms that make theological education accessible to people as far away as Palestine, Ghana, and Myanmar. No longer bound by archaic notions of geographical limitations, our two campuses have broken down old barriers and assumptions, creating a new campus that is both geographical and without boundaries, offering our students to gather in person and virtually. Our faculty is working to provide learning opportunities in Guatemala, Germany, Palestine, and India.

In the past year we have dedicated a great deal of time and resources to developing a Strategic Plan for the seminary which gives us a wide-angle view of future aspirations to fulfill the needs of a changing church and world. Thanks to the collaborative efforts of the ELCA Mission Investment Fund and support from your synod, we will continue to offer degree programs at little or no cost to the student, allowing a higher ed. degree without crippling educational loan debt. In addition, our endowment allows us to apply funding to a new and exciting horizon of learning opportunities for rostered and lay folks.

The Strategic Plan recognizes that learning and formation never end. Our faith narrative is never fully formed. Sanctification is a life-long process full of fits and starts, mountaintops and valleys. This is the reason United Lutheran Seminary will continue to focus on building a lifelong community of learning through Kindling Faith, the Center for Sabbath Rest and Formation. Already in its first year of existence, Kindling Faith has created over sixty opportunities for learning across a wide range of topics, demographics, and learning platforms. While much of the programming takes place in a virtual setting, multi-day events take place on both United campuses, offering alums and lay folk the opportunity to spend time in a place apart where they can engage in learning and fellowship with like-minded colleagues and friends. Kindling Faith has a learning opportunity for you—simply go to uls.edu and click on "Learn" to see what we are offering.

Thank you for walking with us on this portion of our common journey. In the year ahead, I hope to see and meet more of you on the territory of your synod, on zoom, or on one of our beautiful historic campuses. Peace be with you.

Rev. Dr. R. Guy Erwin, *Seminary President*