February 1, 2016

*Office of the Dean*

Dear Graduate,

**Greetings from Wesley**
Your alma mater sends you our warmest greetings during this chilly season. The new year dawns with an eager yearning to discover where in this tumultuous world the Christ-child has been born anew. We set out on spiritual quests like Matthew's Magi. We follow luminous signs pointing to the new and surprising work of God in a world so desperately needing it.

As you know, Wesley Theological Seminary has been lifting up and sending forth enlightened servants of God into ministries of all types around the world. Their fundamental vocation is to point to the Light even as they themselves reflect it.

**Students and Alumni Are Pointing to the Light**
In this letter, I want to highlight for you a few of our many current students whose innovative ministries help others discover Christ in unexpected ways and places.

- **Patrice Gerideau** is an actor, playwright and second-year M.Div. student. Patrice has a burning passion for women who have suffered domestic abuse and whose voices have been silenced by fear and shame. Her ministry project in her Urban Fellows class is to give these women the opportunity to tell their stories. She is providing them a safe communal space where they can rediscover their voice and experience healing redemption in their lives.

- Two M.Div. students have joined forces to create new worship experiences in downtown D.C. among people who ordinarily would not consider going into a church. **Zach Spoerl** and **Matt Wilke**, working at Mt. Vernon Place UMC and Asbury UMC respectively, are starting a ministry project. Their project, Spirit on Tap, is based at a local, landmark restaurant in D.C. They hope to draw spiritual-but-not-religious folks into a community of Spirit-filled conversation and worship.

- Having worked with Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, **M.T.S. student Jane Adams** is working with denominations and congregations on issues of poverty and hunger in the U.S. She provides religious organizations with tools to build on important charitable activities such as food pantries and backpack ministries. She is expanding the scope of ministry in religious communities toward advocacy that changes structures and policies on behalf of the least of these.

***Christian leadership must reinvent itself, must innovate for greater faithfulness, and must be able to engage the full diversity of people within our pluralistic society.*** The people named above – as well as so many more of our students – exemplify these aims.

Ever since establishing itself in Washington D.C., Wesley Theological Seminary has striven for faithfulness, relevance and effectiveness. **You are receiving this letter as a graduate of the school because you are part of that mission and an example of that legacy.** Please know that Wesley is proud of you, grateful for you, and eager to partner with you as we strive to fulfill our mission faithfully in light of the *Missio Dei*.

**Mourning the Loss of a Christian Leader**
With profound sadness, we remember one of the luminous students at Wesley whose life was snuffed out, along with eight other souls, in his congregation, Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, S.C. The Rev. Clementa Pinckney was a D.Min. student at Wesley in the Leadership Excellence track. **He exemplified the spiritually powerful and prophetic leadership that is at the core of our mission.**

"He was not just the pastor of Emanuel," says the Rev. Dr. William McClain, who taught Pinckney in his preaching class. He was the pastor of the city....He was perceived in the Senate as their pastor—Democrats and Republicans alike. He had amazing pastoral skills and concerns for people. The city of Charleston has lost a great leader." Amen, Dr. McClain. Well said. Clem will indeed be sorely missed.

Our response to the assassination of Pinckney will go beyond remembrance. An announcement to that purpose will be forthcoming in the near future. In the meantime, please know Wesley is working with partners in South Carolina and elsewhere to respond faithfully and vigorously to:

- the social forces of hate and bigotry,
- the social conditions of poverty and racism, and
- the banal spirituality that sustains civic deterioration.

**Seeking Connection**
Your seminary knows that we cannot fulfill our mission adequately without you. To help us engage our alumni, we have brought in 2011 graduate Dave Shank, who is dedicated to reconnecting the school with you in a robust partnership. He is an unending font of great ideas. He has started regional gatherings of graduates in the D.C. area. A new Facebook Group with almost 400 members has sprouted up.

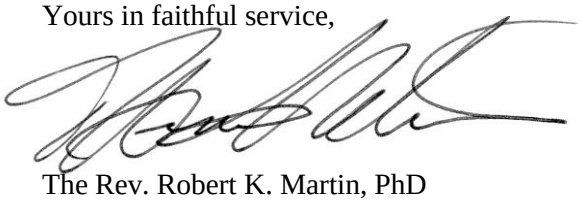
This spring Wesley is launching the **1882 Society** to promote financial support for the preparation of leaders in church and society amongst alumni. This society recognizes alumni for their contributions of $500 or more annually to the seminary. **Will you consider donating today to become an inaugural member of the 1882 Society?** The 1882 Society benefits include attending an exclusive autumn gathering with the dean, acknowledgement in the annual report, and invitations to special events and programming.

We are also talking about how we can provide you with more opportunities to engage our excellent faculty. *Our desire is to support you in your ministry.*

We are also in need of your support. **Please lift your seminary in prayer, and call your faith communities to prayer on our behalf as well. Consider financially supporting the future Christian leaders at Wesley.** Perhaps others in your congregation or agency would be open to investing in the preparation of Christian leaders. With dwindling denominational resources, they need all the help we can provide.

We are on this journey of faith, this spiritual quest, together. **Following Jesus Christ, may the Spirit lead us to discover and experience the Light where we least expect it and where it is most needed.** ***And may we lift that Light ever higher so that others may find the Way, the Truth and the Life.***

Yours in faithful service,



The Rev. Robert K. Martin, PhD
Dean and Professor of Christian Formation and Leadership