

# CALLING

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2023

ANNUAL REPORT

PATHWAYS  
IN THE  
WILDERNESS



# 2023

## ANNUAL REPORT

**On the cover:** In President David McAllister-Wilson's letter on page 2, he invites the Wesley community to go into the wilderness and blaze new trails.

Calling is published by the Office of Development twice a year for alumni, donors, and friends of Wesley.

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# CALLING

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# Pathways in the Wilderness

קול קורא במדבר

“Come with us into the wilderness.” That’s one way to understand Isaiah 40:3 and the best way to report on the transformation underway at Wesley Theological Seminary. The second part of the passage is clear: “Prepare ye the way of the Lord.” Some will remember that song from the rock opera *Godspell*. (I played piano for a church production of that 50 years ago.) But the first part is the key.

One of our Old Testament scholars, Paul Cho, points out, since there is no punctuation in ancient Hebrew, it only says: “A voice cries out in the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord.” And so, there is a choice about what it means.

Is it a voice coming from the wilderness, encouraging us to keep on our current path? Or is the voice calling us to turn and go into the wilderness to blaze new trails?

We believe it is the second because throughout the Bible, the wilderness is where the right path is found: to be unsettled is when the story comes together. Abraham left his home to go into the wilderness on his way to a new land. Moses led the people out of Egypt into the wilderness.

Much of the Old Testament itself was written and assembled not while the Hebrews were in power, but when they were in exile. John the Baptist comes out of the wilderness and quotes this passage from Isaiah to announce the arrival of the Messiah. Even Jesus goes into the wilderness to clarify his vision and prepare for his ministry.

And then, the New Testament was written and compiled while the early Christians were being persecuted and ridiculed.

To take a class here is like a walk deep in the woods or a stroll through a secret garden. Because part of the experience of seminary is to dig deep into all the academic resources of a first-class graduate school for the sheer joy of discovery and to enrich faith. We have made sure to have that kind of faculty. But when we string classes together in a curriculum, our mission is to serve the church by preparing its leadership to echo that voice from the wilderness to take the roads less traveled toward God’s intended future.

An in-depth, residential, graduate-level Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree is the gold standard for this kind of leadership. So, this is what Wesley and other graduate seminaries in North America devote most of their time and resources to provide. But this has never been the mode of preparation for the majority of pastors and is now even decreasing as many congregations can no longer afford these graduates. And for those who attain the M.Div., it has become clear this intense education, completed at the beginning of ministry, is not sufficient for the challenges of a lifetime of leadership in a fast-changing community.

For a long time, Wesley has offered other educational programs, degrees, and other resources, particularly through the Lewis Center for Church Leadership and our innovative Doctor of Ministry tracks.

Now, aided by three large grants from the Lilly Endowment in their Pathways Initiative, we are dramatically expanding becoming one of the few truly full-service, comprehensive theological schools. This includes adaptations to the degree programs, a new Certified Lay Ministry



program, and an exciting array of new certifications in various practices of ministry to strengthen congregations and engage communities at their points of need.

This is all while continuing a strong M.Div. program and expanding our reach across the globe.

We are making new educational pathways for all those who are preparing for ministry. Much of this is uncharted territory, but we have sent out scouts and we're good at experimentation. Wesley is one of the few institutions that can be called a "research seminary," currently devoting more than 10% of our annual income on research projects through the Leadership Center, our Innovative Hub, and the Community Engagement Institute to help churches find new paths in the wilderness.

Our expansive transformation comes at the most difficult time for graduate theological schools when many are shrinking to the decline of mainline Protestant churches and the lingering effects of the pandemic on higher education. We are taking some big chances because we believe they are vital to our mission and our ability to thrive. But these risks are calculated risks.

A key part of our Pathways Initiative is the development of a financial model to demonstrate how we can sustain these changes beyond the period of the grant. This is for our own strategic planning but also for other seminaries finding their way through this difficult time.

Of course, any model for seminary education requires significant outside scholarship support because no ministry pathway is lucrative. The pages of this report recognize those generous people and foundations who lifted Wesley last year with the largest amount of giving in our history. Some of those gifts were made in response to

our giving challenge in June; some were made decades ago as planned gifts.

The way I keep faith with this extraordinary generosity is to be a good steward of the institution in this generation for the sake of the next and to remember that money follows mission. Our deployment of human and financial resources, including fundraising, gives priority to the needs of the church, to our strengths, and to ensure the quality of our programs.

Our strengths are: Our location in Washington, D.C. as the federal city, an urban center and an international capital; our distinctive competencies in leadership studies, community engagement, public theology, and arts and religion; and a first-class faculty who impart a confident, inclusive, and gracious Christian faith.

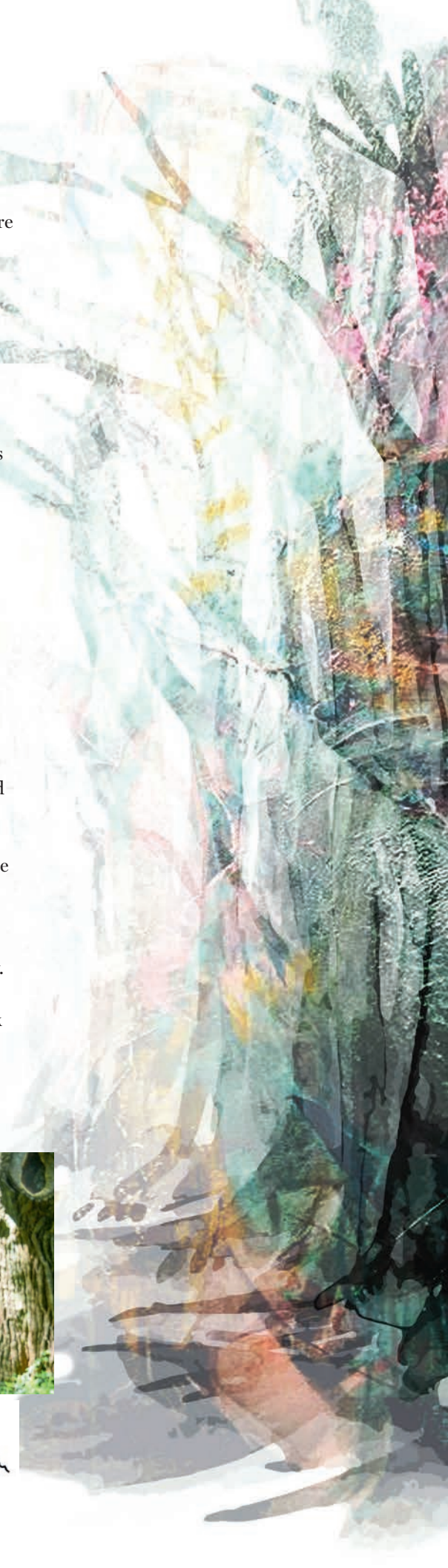
I was elected president just before 9/11. People then suggested we needed to change our student recruitment material and remove pictures of Washington because students would be afraid to come. We decided we wanted the kind of students for whom that crisis caused them to want to come.

We're making the same choice today.

In the words of Robert Frost, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, I took the one less traveled by, and that had made all the difference." Come with us into the wilderness.



*Paul McAllister-Wilson*





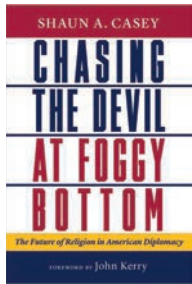


# COMMUNITY

On a beautiful day in April, the Luce Center for Arts and Religion invited Wesley faculty, staff, students, and visitors to gather in the courtyard to create naturally dyed silk scarves with turmeric and black beans. Community members were encouraged to make one for themselves and one as a surprise for someone else who couldn't be part of the festivities.







## *Chasing the Devil at Foggy Bottom: Shaun Casey Returns to Wesley to Discuss His New Book*

Shaun Casey credits the time he spent on the faculty at Wesley as an essential part of his path to the State Department. “Had I not spent the 13 years I did here,” he said at a March event in Wesley’s Oxnam Chapel, “I would not have made it to the State Department.” Casey was a professor of Christian Ethics at the seminary from 2000 to 2013, when he was appointed to be a Special Representative for Religion and Global Affairs at the U.S. Department of State.

He returned to Wesley for an event co-sponsored by The Center for Strategic and International Studies to discuss his new book, *Chasing the Devil at Foggy Bottom: The Future of Religion in American Diplomacy*.

In his opening comments, Casey thanked President David McAllister-Wilson for the ways the President explicitly encouraged him to make involvement in the civic life of Washington, D.C., a part of his role as as faculty member. Any public engagement would be considered service to the institution, McAllister-Wilson assured him, which freed Casey to not only teach Christian Ethics in the classroom but also get involved in real-time conversations around religion in diplomacy and policy. Those conversations and connections led to Casey’s appointment to the State Department and his work as the first Director of the Office of Religion and Global Affairs.

The Office, founded by former Secretary of State John Kerry, was tasked with advising the Secretary on

policy matters as they related to religion and supporting State Department bureaus around the world in their efforts to assess religious dynamics and engage religious leaders and practitioners.

In his book, Casey shares stories that underscore the argument that understanding and engaging religion is a critical part of American diplomacy. Casey shared some of these stories from around the world at the March event, spurred on by questions from interviewer Mike McCurry, Wesley’s Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Public theology and former press secretary to President Bill Clinton.

Casey’s tales ranged from the work of engaging religious communities in the movement to close the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp to a rare meeting on the border of Kazakhstan with a group of Uyghurs, minority Christians who were fleeing persecution in China. He loved traveling to and meeting with folks in Cuba, where Christian house churches connected with mega-churches in the United States sang President Barack Obama’s praises for restoring diplomatic relations and easing the flow of support between the two nations. Long before Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine, the Office of Religion and Global Affairs was assessing the unique reality of Ukraine’s two Orthodox denominations and paying close attention to Putin’s persistent mention in his speeches of that complicated history.

—Dana Cassell



“Had I not spent the 13 years I did here, I would not have made it to the State Department.”





## A Day at Seminary

On March 16, the Wesley Admissions and Community Life offices welcomed almost 30 UMC Elders from the Northern Virginia District for a full day of continuing theological education at our first “Seminarian for a Day” workshop.

Appropriately for the Lenten season, the lectures and discussions focused on the topics of atonement and resurrection, in which many elders expressed specific interest. Four faculty members with varying specialties — Dr. Beverly Mitchel, Dr. Laura Holmes, Dr. Sathi Clarke, and Dr. Hyemin Na — addressed the visiting clergy and provided a comprehensive and holistic overview and plenty of opportunity to voice questions and foster rich discussion.

After studying theological and biblical interpretations of atonement and resurrection against the backdrop of the rise of Christian nationalism and environmental degradation, they explored how such theories might inform the worship and mission of the Church.

This in-person event also offered an excellent opportunity for networking and strengthening ties between Wesley and local Methodist leadership.

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# BISHOPS AT GRADUATION

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Graduation this spring featured two of the newest United Methodist bishops, both with strong ties to Wesley. Bishop Tom Berlin, commencement speaker, served 12 years as a member of the Wesley Board of Governors, acting as chairperson from 2012 until 2022. Before he was elected bishop and appointed to lead the Florida Conference, Berlin served churches of all sizes across the Virginia Conference, including 25 years as Lead Pastor of Floris UMC, a multi-site, multi-staff congregation near the nation's capital.

Berlin's denominational service includes work as a delegation leader to General Conference and a member of the Commission on A Way Forward. In his commencement address, Bishop Berlin encouraged graduates to take the Great Commandment with them as they move into ministry, to rest in the knowledge that they are never alone and already equipped. Ministers are called "to love God so much that we love our neighbor, to love our neighbors in such a way that we learn who God is, and to love ourselves in such a way that our neighbor learns that they can love themselves," he said.

Bishop Robin Dease, the 2023 recipient of the Society of John Wesley Award of Merit, is a Wesley alumnae twice over. She graduated with her Master of Divinity degree in 1998 and earned her Doctor of Ministry degree in 2010 (Magna Cum Laude). Bishop Dease served the South Carolina Conference of the UMC as a congregational pastor and a District Superintendent. After earning her D.Min at Wesley, she was called to be a professor and the Chair of the Department of Religion and Philosophy at her alma mater, Claflin University in Orangeburg, South Carolina.

Nominated from the floor and eventually voted in as a write-in candidate, Dease was elected bishop by the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference in November 2022 and appointed episcopal leader of the North Georgia Conference of the UMC. In accepting the Award of Merit, she expressed her gratitude for the ways Wesley prepared her for leadership and deepened her call to ministry. "Our seminary," Dease said, "prepared us to take part in something that is greater than ourselves."





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— *Bishop Tom Berlin*

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## Retirement Tribute to Denise Dombkowski Hopkins

On April 18, 2023, the Wesley community gathered to honor Denise Dombkowski Hopkins, Ph.D., Woodrow and Mildred Miller Professor of Biblical Theology and Hebrew Bible, the longest-serving tenured woman faculty member in the Seminary's history who retired in June.

Over 37 years, Denise has made countless contributions to the institution, foremost as an exemplary professor dedicated to the craft of collaborative teaching and learning. She has shaped generations of students in every degree program and through church-based offerings. Denise has advanced scholarship through books, articles, and edited volumes that chart novel interpretive and interdisciplinary horizons as they engage readers with critical questions and reflective analysis. She has been a wise administrator having served as Doctor of Ministry Program Director, chaired faculty committees, and co-founded and co-led the Bible and Practical Theology Section in the Society of Biblical Literature.

Through the years and changing demographics, Denise has been a trusted and valued faculty colleague, and an advocate for the seminary's strategic initiatives in evening, intensive, and online teaching modalities. She has mentored a diverse group of students, graduates, and colleagues through academic, personal, and vocational celebrations and challenges. The Psalmist wonders, "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?" (Ps 8:3-4, NRSV).

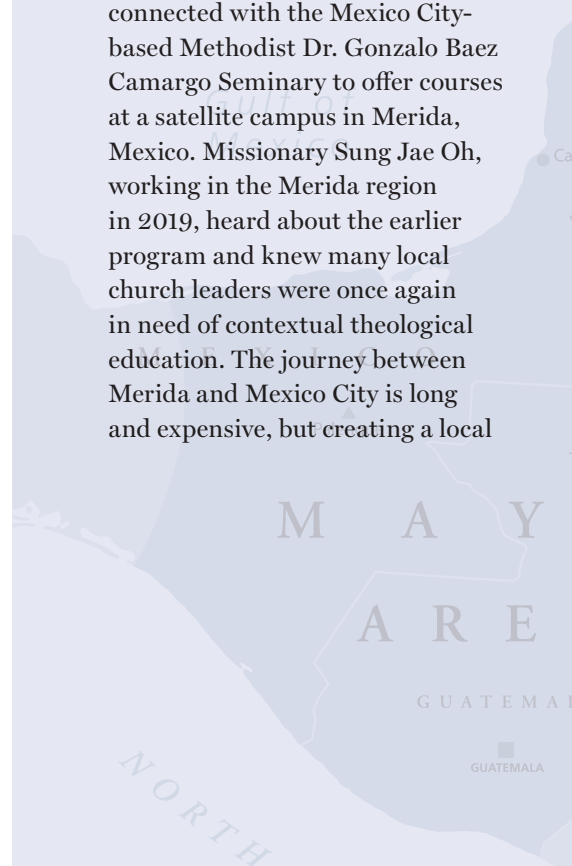
As professor, scholar, administrator, colleague, and mentor, Denise has asked such vital questions of herself and with others in service to a commitment that we together embody God's covenant community with justice and peace for all.

—Michael S. Koppel

## Wesley's Global Impact: Yucatan Region

Wesley has a long history of connecting people of faith across countries and cultures through hosting international students, sending missionaries and teachers abroad, and resourcing international learning communities. One exciting international partnership is currently unfolding in the Yucatan region of Mexico, where a Mexican-Korean missionary initiative is providing needed theological education for Christian leaders in the region.

The origins of this partnership stretch back to 2004, when Wesley connected with the Mexico City-based Methodist Dr. Gonzalo Baez Camargo Seminary to offer courses at a satellite campus in Merida, Mexico. Missionary Sung Jae Oh, working in the Merida region in 2019, heard about the earlier program and knew many local church leaders were once again in need of contextual theological education. The journey between Merida and Mexico City is long and expensive, but creating a local





satellite program is making quality theological education accessible to leaders in the region.

Now in its third year, the Yucatan program has 15 students expected to graduate next year. The program is particularly successful because it is built around expressed needs of local leaders, with Wesley lending institutional resources and connections to faculty.

Dr. Sathianathan “Sathi” Clarke, Interim Dean and Professor of Theology, Culture, and Mission at Wesley, says that this partnership is simply an extension of what the seminary has long been doing: exploring “how theology embedded in communities becomes a resource for constructing, imaginatively, theologies that work across cultures.”

This commitment to following local and embedded communal leadership is at work in many Wesley partnerships and programs. Dr. Kyunglim Shin Lee, Vice President for International Relations, is excited about several international initiatives with local church leaders, including efforts to extend the Yucatan efforts into an international program for other neighboring countries, certificate courses in Argentina, Haiti, and Dominican Republic, and conversations in Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Cuba. Dr. Shin Lee says that all these partnerships honor and respect the local leadership, working to build programs and create curriculum that respond directly to their expressed, contextual need.



## Hybrid Week – Military Chaplains

During the week of March 6, 2023, the newest cohort of Military Chaplain Doctor of Ministry students was on campus for their opening course with President David McAllister-Wilson and Dr. Jim Driscoll. The week focused on forming chaplain leaders who are prepared to serve effectively at increasing levels of responsibility and seniority.

Every day, a different VIP guest speaker visited. One of these VIPs was General David Berger, Commandant of the United States Marine Corps, who spoke on Tuesday morning. He highlighted the importance of chaplains over his years of service and related how Chaplain (Captain USN-Retired) Dale White, a Wesley alumnus, brought critical ministry to the Marine Corps. (Wesley thanks Chaplain White for arranging General Berger’s visit.)

Wesley Board of Governor-Emeritus, former Navy Secretary John Dalton and Mrs. Dalton visited for the Commandant’s presentation. Another highlight of the week came on Friday afternoon when Chaplain (Major General) Thomas Solhjem, the Army Chief of Chaplains, visited as a VIP guest speaker. Chaplain Solhjem surprised President McAllister-Wilson by presenting him with the Order of Aaron and Hur Award.

This prestigious award is given by the Army Chief of Chaplains to select individuals who support the military through humble leadership and sacrificial dedication to chaplain ministry. Just as Aaron and Hur supported the arms of Moses, recipients of this award work tirelessly to support the work of chaplaincy.

Major General Solhjem honored Dr. McAllister-Wilson, on behalf of all military branches, for leading the seminary to equip chaplains for innovative ministry to service members and families.



# Community Tuesday:

EACH TUESDAY, WESLEY HOLDS SERVICES AT OXNAM CHAPEL FOLLOWED BY A COMMUNITY LUNCH IN THE REFECTORY.



*These are a sampling of some of the special groups and speakers we hosted during the 2022-23 school year.*

## Following the Call to Service *by Mele Taumoepeau Aho*

As the President, CEO, and Founder of Faith and Community Empowerment (FACE), Hyepin C. Im, MDiv '04 is an internationally recognized leader and advocate dedicated "to help churches by connecting them to resources and partners that could help them create a bigger impact and positive influence in their communities."

I visited Wesley on February 28 and preached on Matthew 5:16 which reads, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

The story of her calling was one of caution, while still seeking to obey God. She grew up hearing her mother's story of calling where she learned if God calls you, you should obey the first time. "So, I told God, 'You know God, I don't believe in unnecessary suffering. If you



call me, just make it clear and I will obey.” And sure enough, she heard the call and arrived at Wesley Theological Seminary in 2001.

Im shared she was reluctant to enter ministry for three reasons. “First, I grew up as a PK (pastor’s kid) in an immigrant family. I thought ministry equated to poverty. It wasn’t just my family. In Korean, it is called ‘imminmoke.’ This is where the minister ends up becoming the unpaid social worker – helping so many people with jobs, housing, and healthcare. Second, I saw there was no place of leadership for women in ministry. And third, it seemed pastors were powerful within the church but had no influence or relevance outside the walls of the church.”

But God had a plan and led her to use her gifts in a different kind of ministry. Im found many parallels in Joseph’s story - who rose from servanthood to a national leadership role in Egypt. Im followed the example of Joseph when she established FACE to shine a light on the needs and gifts of both the Korean American immigrant and underserved communities.

By following her call to ministry, Im is serving in ways she never imagined including the Obama Administration as the U.S. Presidential Appointee on the Board of Corporation for AmeriCorps and with Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Faith-based Security Advisory Council.



## 2023 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Lecture

*by Titus Bryant, MDiv '23*

Dr. King, with his articulated dream, guided humans of both past and present to not only hear an alternative reality, but imagine one as well. Wesley Theological Seminary’s 2023 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Lecture was no different as Rev. Dr. Teresa Fry-Brown, in the spirit of Dr. King, guided the Wesley Community to understand the significance of “dreaming out loud.”

It was my marvelous privilege to sit down with Dr. Fry-Brown and discuss in greater detail the significance of dreaming out loud in a practical

way. In doing this, she challenged us to dream of a more peaceful and harmonious society and live it out with audacity. In fact, Dr. Fry-Brown was the embodiment of audaciousness as she rose from her seat to conduct public one-on-one conversations with college students in the audience who were curious of their relevance in the work of freedom and justice today.

The entire audience sat in awe as they witnessed her empower these students to see their own unique gifts as tools for living out a larger dream. Her display of brilliance and unapologetic prophetic witness modeled the significance of employing ourselves in the work of radical dreaming!





## 2023 Archbishop Oscar Romero Lecture

*by Lucila Crena, Professor of Ethics and Public Theology*

On March 21, Wesley held the 2023 Archbishop Oscar Romero Lecture. These Romero lectures are designed to honor the work and legacy of Archbishop Romero and to consider the implications of his work for the present moment.

This year's lecturer Dr. Luis Rivera, Senior Researcher, former Academic Dean, and former Vice President of Academic Affairs at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary (UMC), as well as a leader in many of the most important Latina/e/o/x theological education institutions, including most recently as President of the Board for the Asociación para la Educación Teológica Hispana (AETH).

Dr. Rivera's lecture, titled "Social Movements as Reformers of Theological Education," was based on groundbreaking archival research that he is currently conducting on the praxial origins of the "boom" in Latina

theological education in the 1970s. During that decade, twelve seminaries across the United States launched programs geared toward Latina/o/e students.

Dr. Rivera's research asks: "How and why did this transformation take place?" The early findings from his research traces a connection between Chicana and Latina social movements in the late 1960s, the leadership of Latina/o ecclesial reformers who were inspired by these movements to transform their denominations and their institutions, and the cultivation of a generation of scholars and theological educators who developed a distinctive academic version of Latina theology, in turn securing a place for the Latino community in the periphery of the academy.

Summarizing his argument, Dr. Rivera said, "This lecture reflects on the capacity of social justice movements to transform theological education. It illustrates historically and reflects theoretically on how social movements in their 'prophetic role' encourage the emergence of 'disruptive

religion' among leaders and groups in churches and in seminaries. The convergence of 'religious outsiders' (the social movement) and 'religious insiders' (reformist church movements) creates pathways for the presence of the movement in theological education, and for the connection of churches and theological education to the movements."

Dr. Rivera's lecture was followed by a Dean's Forum over lunch with Wesley Student Council President Evan Taylor '23 and current student and pastor Cassy Nuñez, facilitated by Professor of Christian Ethics and Public Theology Lucila Crena. Evan Taylor and Dr. Rivera spoke about the importance of memory to the formation and vitality of transformative movements, and Pastor Cassy Nuñez issued a call to Wesley Theological Seminary and the academy to heed more closely to current social movements.

The lecture and Dean's Forum were well-attended by Wesley students, faculty, and administrators, as well as leaders from the local ecclesial community, including Dr. Emma Escobar, Coordinator of Hispanic/Latino Ministries for the Baltimore-Washington Conference, Rev. Dr. Lydia Muñoz, Executive Director of the National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministries (UMC), and Rev. Dr. Eliezer Valentín-Castañón, Frederick District Superintendent of the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Dr. Rivera embarked on an 8-day trip across the United States to continue his archival research. The Wesley community blesses him as he continues this important work, and eagerly looks forward to its publication.





## Wesley Association of Black Alumni

On Tuesday, March 15, the seminary hosted the Wesley Association of Black Alumni (WABA) for worship and fellowship. The gathering began in the Chapel with a worship service organized in the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) tradition by Chapel Elder Hyemin Na and Chapel Intern Ruth Jackson, MDiv '23. Jackson expressed, "as a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, it was a pleasure to honor Retiring Presiding Elder Ronald E. Braxton from the Potomac District." Presiding Elder Braxton is a Wesley Alumnus, DMin '09, and served the AMEC for more than 55 years.

Chapel guest speaker Joshua DuBois, former Director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships under President Barack Obama, shared a powerful and touching message

from Colossians 3:1-14 and prompted the question, "Where is my ladder leading and is it against the right wall?" As attendees contemplated Dubois' message, they migrated to the Refectory for a community lunch with fellow members of WABA, as well as current and former Wesley faculty, staff, and members of the Board of Governors.

Rev. Brenda Girton-Mitchell, MDiv '04 began the conversation regarding community engagement with Joshua DuBois. DuBois encouraged WABA to "show up in unexpected places" and "bloom where God plants you."

Dr. Veronice Miles, Mary Elizabeth McGehee Joyce Chair in Preaching, re-introduced Wesley's specialization in African American Church Studies (AACS) and invited alumni to support the program through the Wesley Fund. Donations helped bring the total of support for AACS to just over \$28,000.

Turner, who was among the first

Wesley graduates to obtain the AACS specialization, exclaimed, "Being back at Wesley with other Black alumni was refreshing and sacred. It was necessary for us to be back on campus and to reconnect with the school. My hope is that the event happens every year and that the momentum WABA has created continues."

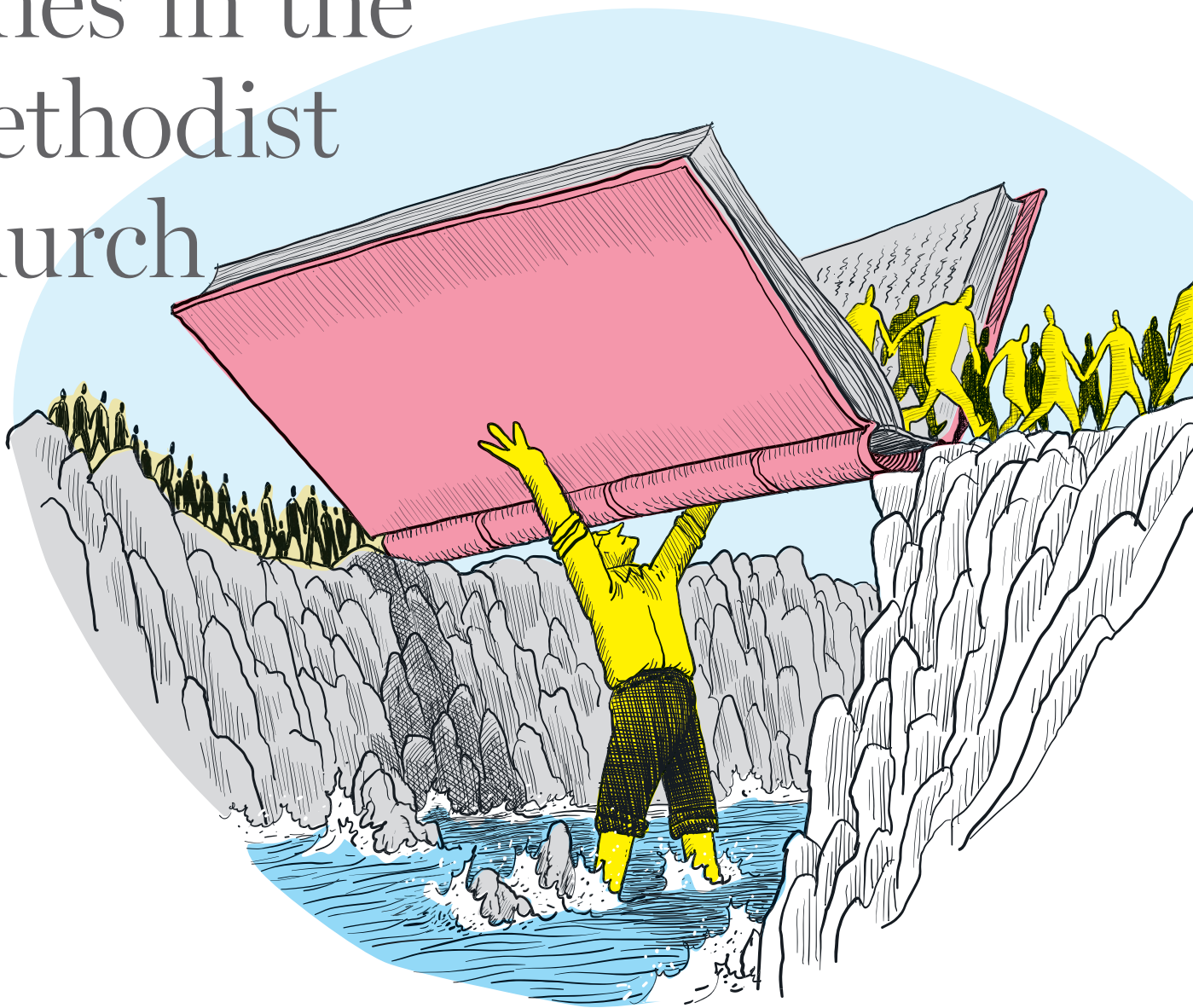
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*If you would like to support the African American Church Studies program or other Wesley initiatives, please go to [www.wesleyseminary.edu/give](http://www.wesleyseminary.edu/give) or send a check to the Wesley Development Office. If you have questions, please contact Director of Wesley Council Kasongo Butler at [kbutler@wesleyseminary.edu](mailto:kbutler@wesleyseminary.edu).*

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# Supporting our students during uncertain times in the Methodist Church





**T**oward the end of the fall 2022 semester, Interim Dean Sathi Clarke invited me to think with him about how we can support United Methodist students at Wesley during this difficult time for the denomination. I am aware that many students are grieving the loss of the denomination as they knew it and are questioning how they will fulfill their own vocation through a denomination that is rapidly changing and is emotionally fraught.

I remember that in my first conversation about the possibility of ordination when I was a young adult, I asked my pastor, “How could I become an authority in a church that won’t ordain people because of their sexuality?”

The denomination has been wrestling with differing understandings about human sexuality very nearly since its inception in 1968. Institutionally, Wesley is aware that the tension and conflict has left many of our students and alumni dejected, anxious, and confused. We chose to come together as a theological community to share our burdens, encourage each other, discuss the ways forward, and strengthen our commitment to God’s mission of inclusive love, generous reconciliation, and just peace for all.

On January 31, our weekly chapel worship was entitled, “A Service of Renewal and Hope.” Our preacher was Dr. Carla Works, United Methodist and New Testament professor. Her sermon was *Repairers of the Breach*.<sup>1</sup> From our worship, we then gathered in the refectory for community lunch. Our conversation began with Rev. Dr. Doug Tzan, who in addition to being a church history professor at Wesley is also a United Methodist pastor currently serving the Sykesville Parish (made up of St. Paul’s and Gaither UMCs in Sykesville, Maryland). Dr. Tzan was able to share about how the UMC arrived at the point where we are and to share from his personal and pastoral experience of leading a church through their own disaffiliation discernment process.

After Dr. Tzan’s presentation, several United Methodist faculty members reflected on their current thoughts on the where the church is and what we have to offer students who are navigating responding to their call from God in the midst of denominational conflict and division. Dr. Laura Holmes, professor of New Testament and United Methodist Elder, shared what it was like for her to navigate the ordination process and discern ordination through one annual conference while living and serving away from that conference. Rev. Dr. Hyemin Na shared on her experience as growing up in Korea with a different mindset than

“Wesley faculty are committed to accompanying our students in whatever way will help them live into their vocations.”

she has now. Dr. Carla Works offered her perspective as someone who came into the UMC from a more conservative denomination where women’s voices are not welcomed or valued in the same way as men’s voices. Rev. Dr. Doug Powe offered his support for students who are navigating ordination processes. Although Dr. Phil Wingeier-Rayo was unable to be present for this event, he conveyed his commitment to journey with students who are discerning or pursuing a call to ordination as deacons.

I shared with our gathering community that I find hope to be the best and hardest thing about being a Christian. No matter what votes happen, I can’t help but hope the denomination will change toward more inclusion and justice for LGBTQ+ folks. What I can offer students, as their professor and as an ordained elder, is to sit with them in the beautiful place of hoping and the devastating place of hopes unfulfilled. As the denomination unfolds over the next several years, both into and beyond our long-awaited next General Conference, Wesley faculty are committed to accompanying our students in whatever way will help them live into their vocations and wrestle with the challenges of being a part of the institution that is the church.







by Dr. Bruce C. Birch,  
Dean Emeritus and  
Professor Emeritus of  
Biblical Theology,  
and Dr. Laura Sweat  
Holmes, Professor of  
New Testament, Wesley  
Theological Seminary

On July 1, 2023, Dr. Carla Swafford Works began serving in her new role as Dean of Wesley Theological Seminary after 15 years as a beloved member of the Wesley community. To celebrate this momentous occasion, *The Calling* asked her colleagues and friends Bruce Birch and Laura Holmes to introduce her to the broader Wesley community.

# Introducing Dean Carla Swafford Works

## PASSION AND PAUL

About 40 of us found seats on the cracked stone benches that, 2,000 years ago, had been an amphitheater at Caesarea Maritima in Israel. Below us stood Professor Carla Works, center stage (or as close as she could get to it with other groups present, too). We waited with bated breath; after all, we knew that this was the one day on the whole trip to Israel that Professor Works got to talk about the apostle Paul.

If you know Professor Works, you know she loves to talk about Paul. There was no chance we would be distracted by the Mediterranean Sea right beside us. Taking us through the twists and turns of Paul's experiences and imprisonment there, Professor Works ensured we would hang on every word. Anyone who has been blessed enough to hear her teach, and particularly, to hear her teach on her deepest passion and joy, knows this experience. The world opens in a new way; we see things differently now. Whether in KG-01, a seminar room, virtually, or on an ancient site, Professor Works brings the past alive, helping her listeners see history as though it is still present.

## ARRIVAL AT WESLEY

Speaking of the past, Professor Works first came to Wesley Seminary in the Fall of 2009 while she was still finishing her doctoral dissertation at Princeton Theological Seminary in the field of New Testament. Even with those ongoing scholarly obligations, she quickly established herself as one of Wesley's most gifted classroom teachers.

Students came out of her classroom excited about the New Testament and newly empowered to use its voices and perspectives as a resource for ministry. Her elective courses were often filled to their limit, especially her seminars on the teachings of Paul. (Who would not love a professor who uses *Yertle the Turtle* as a resource to understand the apostle's teaching?) Promotion through the academic ranks came steadily and her work was recognized by elevation to the rank of Full Professor in 2019.

## PAUL AND THE LEAST OF THESE

Part of a professor's role is to teach the students in her classes, of course. Another part is to teach students she will never meet, through her research and writing. It was in the context of her



“Professor Works is well-equipped to lead Wesley in the role of Dean in such a time. She has grown to maturity as a teacher, a scholar, and a leader within the context of our own Wesley community.”



classroom teaching at Wesley that Professor Works came to the next idea she wanted to work on: How is Paul, whose writings have done such damage in the history of Christian interpretation, a voice of liberative good news for the least and the last, both in the first century and today?

With perseverance and skill, Professor Works looked deeply into Paul's letters and their historical context to see where the Spirit is at work at the margins of society. Writing a book is an act of faith; it requires seeing what is not yet visible and working so that what is glimpsed in the future is made a reality in the present. When students encounter her work, like "The Least of These: Paul and the Marginalized", without fail, they say, "Why haven't I heard that before?" Our worlds are enlarged by her theological imagination, historical and literary acumen, and responsiveness to the living Word.

## ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

Not every capable and creative classroom teacher or adept researcher and writer is equipped to serve in seminary leadership as a Dean. The role of chief academic officer requires qualities that go beyond excellence in one's own academic discipline. Professor Works is indeed possessed of many of these qualities.

She is a person of deep Christian faith and commitment to the life and ministries of the church. She has never been simply and narrowly interested in the world of the biblical text as a focus of scholarly interest. Her teaching and her leadership within the committees and task forces of institutional life have made clear that her wider interest is the effectiveness of the church's ministries and the task of forming women and men to empower their ministries on behalf of the church. Professor Works is not simply a biblical scholar, she is a theological educator.

In the necessary committee and task force work that mark academic institutional life, she has often risen to become

a voice of wisdom and has been asked to give leadership in addressing key issues. Recently, for example, she has been a leader in envisioning and shaping Wesley's new hybrid degree program. Whether as committee member or in a more formal leadership role, her colleagues have come to trust her voice to make wise and helpful contributions that move Wesley forward.

Finally, Professor Works is a people-oriented leader. She knows how to listen. She takes every perspective seriously. She instinctively seeks to include all and give to all a respected place, whether in the classroom, the committee room, or the wider witness of the church in the world. Part of being a people-oriented leader is recognizing how everyone in the room is a whole person. We all bring, or should be able to bring, all of ourselves to the work that we do. When Professor Works is teacher, scholar, and Dean, she is also friend, daughter, sister, wife, mother, and child of God. She has modeled for decades how one does not have to choose between these callings: God calls and equips us for all of these things.

Theological education today is in a challenging environment as are many of our society's institutions. The past is no longer a predictor for the present or the future; everything seems uncertain. And yet, through her vocation to this point, Professor Carla Works has helped us see how the past is still present, shaping and helping us see where God has been and is at work. She has the courage to look into the future, to see where the Spirit is leading us ahead. It is clear, though, that both past and future matter because of what they say to us about our work in the world today.

Professor Works is well-equipped to lead Wesley in the role of Dean in such a time. She has grown to maturity as a teacher, a scholar, and a leader within the context of our own Wesley community. We are fortunate that she has accepted the challenge to lead us as our Dean in the days that lie ahead.



# The Wesley Innovation Hub:

## Preparing Leaders for the Church We Can't Yet Imagine

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The Wesley Innovation Hub at Wesley Theological Seminary inspires and equips faithful individuals and faith communities to passionately pursue God's dream for the world. Our work is primarily fueled by three Lilly Endowment, Inc, grants: the Young Adult Initiative, Thriving Congregations Initiative, and, most recently, the Christian Parenting & Caregiving Initiative. Through these and related programming, we equip young adults to be changemakers in their churches and communities, build collaborative networks of faithful innovators, and equip pastors and laity to design more sustainable and impactful ministry. This work fuels extensive research, partnerships, curricula, coaching, and training that we seek to extend to and beyond the Wesley community. Sustainability, partnership, creativity, and joy are key to our work.

### YOUNG ADULT INITIATIVE

The Wesley Innovation Hub welcomed the first young adult Ministry Innovators cohort in the Fall of 2022. An intentional mix of three seminary students and three lay persons between the ages of 23 and 29 was selected to represent a variety of cultures and contexts. These six young

adults learned Design Thinking in the classroom with Dr. Emily Peck in the fall, then traveled to San Antonio, Texas, with Rev. Beth Ludlum and Julie Hagen for the Innovation Immersion in January.

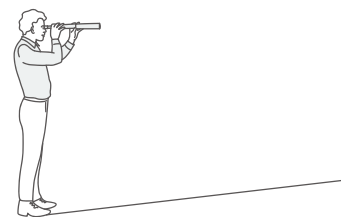
The Innovation Immersion explored neighborhoods and ministries of San Antonio, Texas, with attention to whose stories are preserved and told, how community assets are mobilized for good, and how ordinary people, Christians, and churches respond with intention and creativity to problems and opportunities. The aim of the immersion is to help young adult Ministry Innovators reflect on their own leadership skills, context, and call. The Ministry Innovators returned in the spring semester to select and lead congregational teams through the innovation cycle and apply their learning to equip and empower faith communities to meet young adults where they are in their own faith journeys.

### THRIVING CONGREGATIONS INITIATIVE

United Methodist congregations from across the region formed The Source Collaborative, a two-year program that helps congregations identify their own markers of thriving based on their own

community and context. With the help of a coach, each congregation creates a strategic plan for congregational change that will allow them to move toward those markers. Team members come together to articulate how the fruits of the church can be a source of community transformation.

To date, 17 congregations, 9 Wesley Seminary student research associates, and 5 Clergy coaches are actively planning or working on ministries flowing from The Source Collaborative process. This fall, the Innovation Hub team will host a fast-track cohort of up to 50 congregational teams from across the US and across denominations during The Source Collaborative fall retreat.



### A LOOK AHEAD

#### *Fall 2023:*

- ❖ Applications open for young adult Ministry Innovators internship
- ❖ Registration for The Source Collaborative Fast-Track cohort
- ❖ Research begins for The Christian Parenting & Caregiving Initiative

#### *Winter/Spring 2024:*

- ❖ Innovation Immersion for young adult Ministry Innovators
- ❖ Innovation Hub students, faculty, and staff-led worship at Oxnam Chapel
- ❖ The Source Collaborative ministry launch and celebration
- ❖ Ministry Innovation interns select and lead congregations through the innovation cycle



**MINISTRY INNOVATORS,  
CLASS OF '23:**

Lauren Jackson, *Cedar Hill, TX*  
Zoey McShane, *Alexandria, VA*  
Lynne Onishi, *Mukilteo, WA*  
Regina Okogun, *Silver Spring, MD*  
Brianna Reaves, *Culpeper, VA*  
Paul Tribble, *Lebanon, TN*



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# INTERVIEW WITH BISHOP ROBIN DEASE

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Robin Dease (MDiv '98, DMin '10) is something of a reluctant bishop. It's not that she is uninterested in the work: Dease is a woman of many passions, including fashion, food, gardening, and riding her motorcycle in addition to her deep commitment to Christ and the church. And it's certainly not for lack of education or experience: Dease earned both her Master of Divinity and her Doctor of Ministry from Wesley, and she has experience in executive leadership both inside the church and out. Once she completed her doctorate, she served her alma mater, Claflin University in Orangeburg, South Carolina, as a professor and chair of the Department of Religion and Philosophy. And after years of congregational leadership, she spent eight years as a District Superintendent in the South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church. By all accounts, Dease is abundantly equipped and prepared to be a bishop.

It's just that she wasn't expecting to become a bishop now. When she was elected to the episcopacy last fall, Dease had just begun an appointment at St. Andrew by-the-Sea UMC in Hilton Head, South Carolina, and was happily finding a pastoral groove again after serving 8 years on the Cabinet. Her years as a District Superintendent had been challenging, and she was relishing the return to congregational ministry. She was, she says, having

fun getting to be with people, learning the community, and encouraging and empowering a congregation to be active in mission. Life was good. But God and the church had other plans for her.

When the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference of the United Methodist Church found itself mired in a seemingly unending episcopal election process last fall at Lake Junaluska, Dease started getting calls. Folks wanted to add her name to the ballot. They believed she would be a good bishop, and they also believed that her candidacy might break through the gridlock of the voting process. Dease demurred at first: her conference had already endorsed and put forward a great, qualified candidate, and she herself was finally back in the pulpit, doing what she loved in congregational community. But her colleagues were insistent, so she gave the required 10-minute speech. She was intentionally clear and honest about where she stood on hot-button issues, sure that her transparency would scare folks away. And then she removed herself from the ballot. But the gridlock persisted. Colleagues nominated Dease a second time, from the floor. This time, she couldn't say no. The South Carolina delegation gathered around Dease and their endorsed candidate, Rev. Ken Nelson, for a time of emotional prayer.

When the final results were tallied, Robin Dease had been elected the newest bishop of the United Methodist Church. The auditorium at Lake Junaluska erupted into applause. Dease made her way to the microphone and offered her gratitude through tears. "I will continue to lead with integrity," she said, not entirely sure whether this new appointment would be a blessing or a curse.

Today, Dease serves as the first Black woman bishop of the North Georgia







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## "I will continue to lead with integrity."

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Conference. Her election was the first time a Black woman had been elected bishop from the South Carolina Conference and, in fact, the first bishop elected out of South Carolina in nearly 20 years. Integrity in leadership has always been important to her, but her path to ministry has been filled with twists and turns.

Before arriving at Wesley in the 1990s, Dease had already been to fashion school in Atlanta, completed her undergraduate studies at Claflin, and gained experience in catering and food service. Her first day on campus, she noticed an advertisement for an on-campus job in the refectory, and applied immediately. It wasn't long before her supervisor, Director of Food Services Beth Cogswell, noticed Dease's leadership potential. "Robin," she said, "you could do my job!" Cogswell and Marriott, who had the contract for the seminary's food services at the time, backed the encouragement with action, sending Dease to the Culinary Institute of America. For several years, Dease attended classes at Wesley part-time while taking culinary courses and working full-time for Marriott. When she finished at CIA, Marriott promoted her to her own account across town at George Washington University. That job supervising food services at GWU helped Dease hone her leadership skills. "One of the things I believed in

doing," she reflected on that time, "was equipping the staff to lead if I couldn't be there, so that they could still do what needed to be done. I needed to empower them to lead."

For seven years, Dease combined her seminary coursework with her food service job. Her Master of Divinity degree came with a supplemental education: on-the-ground training in how to lead a team. She remembers fondly her student colleagues and professors at Wesley during those years, especially her preaching courses with Rev. Dr. William Bobby McClain and theology classes with Dr. Josiah Young. But if you ask Dease to reflect on her time at Wesley, the first memory she will share is the story of Beth Cogswell encouraging and empowering her to lead.

Leadership as encouragement and empowerment has remained a hallmark of Dease's work in the church. Those lessons from food service turned out to be deeply relevant for pastoral ministry. In her work as a pastor and superintendent, Dease worked hard to equip and empower congregations and communities to catch a shared vision and learn to lead, themselves.

At St. Andrew by-the-Sea, she had just begun to excite the congregation about new local mission partnerships when she was called away to become Bishop. The congregation had begun

a food ministry and started to learn about school district needs for after-school care sites. Folks were getting excited and energized for mission. Dease, elected to the episcopacy after only 18 months in the congregation, hated to leave just as things were taking root. But at her sending service, the church gave her a great gift: they told her that they had learned not just how to follow her, but how to lead and step out, themselves. "You have given power to the congregation," shared the congregation's board chair, "reiterated our heritage, and expected us to develop and execute the strategic and tactical initiatives required to fulfill our mission. We will make you proud."

Empowering people looks a little different, these days. The work of a bishop is different from the work of a pastor, different even than the work of a District Superintendent. Being a bishop is a little more public and a little less personal. The North Georgia conference was already embroiled in a lawsuit over disaffiliation when Dease arrived, and the Bishop has found herself featured in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* multiple times since she was installed—not, she says, something that happens when you're a District Superintendent. The days of an episcopal leader are more regimented, and Dease finds herself with less freedom to connect with folks in the ways she'd most like.



# Beyond



# Wesley

by Sondra Wheeler,  
Professor Emerita of  
Christian Ethics

The topic as posed by *Calling* asks about my ministry since leaving Wesley. This frames the question of “What have you been up to?” in just the right way.

In the letter to the Ephesians, the role of a church leader is defined as “equipping the saints for the work of ministry” (4:12), and the single most important message a leader can send is that ministry belongs not to the ordained but to the baptized. Having left behind my official position as a teacher in a church-based seminary means only that my discipleship takes a new shape: as one of my students remarked as I prepared to leave Wesley, retirement is not a biblical concept!

Practically speaking, now as so often in my life, what I am up to is more a matter of tasks that present themselves as urgently needing to be done than a question of choosing what I imagine I’d like to do.

An old friend with dementia has needed our help, and so much of the first two years has been occupied with my husband and me seeing to her needs and getting her affairs into an order that would provide the material and emotional support she will require. As that initial chapter draws to a close, new issues continue to arise and we try to make adjustments that will give our friend the best and fullest life possible as her condition advances.

Like so much that is holy, this sort of caregiving is by turns hilarious and heartbreaking, a continuing lesson in humility and a reminder of the social web that must be sustained if the most vulnerable are to be included in our communities.

Geographically further off, but still very much on our hearts and minds every day, is a ministry that began as it seemed by accident back in 2010 when I went with other faculty and administrators on an extended visit to India.

Part of that stay involved being placed in a seminary as short-term visiting faculty and having a resident faculty member as host. One Sunday morning, my host took me to worship at a Baptist church pastored by an old seminary classmate and his wife. The church was located in a desperately poor area outside Bangalore, a community ravaged by all the diseases of poverty and poor sanitation, with tuberculosis and dysentery rampant and life expectancies short.

There I heard the story of how this couple had adopted two children, and



then found other children abandoned on the doorstep of their little storefront church, children whose parents had died or simply could not feed them. At the time of my visit, they had 32 children in their care!

When the numbers had outgrown what they could fit into their small house church, a donor helped them to rent a larger space on the outskirts of town. But even with that help, they could not do everything. Rev. Violet

confided to me her regret that they could not afford school fees for all the children, and so some had to stay at home after primary school. It took only a modest check to cover those fees for the year, and thus began our relationship with what has grown into Violet Children's Home.

It is a place that now, with the support of residential staff, provides housing, food, medical care, tutoring, and emotional and spiritual nurture to 34 children. And children do not simply age out of Violet's at 18. They remain and are helped to find job training and employment, receiving continued support until they are ready to launch their own lives and families.

But it remains a financially precarious enterprise. COVID was devastating in India, particularly among the dalit communities who occupy the very bottom of the social ladder. The

ascension of a government unfriendly to Christian institutions has brought further practical challenges, and together these have cost most of the domestic support for the Home.

For a few years we were able to meet its basic budget out of our retirement funds, but that was unsustainable. So, this year we embarked on our first-ever development effort, inviting others to join us in providing the roughly \$40,000 it costs to maintain the array of services these children need to grow. It is a learning curve, and we are still very much beginners. But we have excellent coaching, and a slowly growing group of supporters who find the same joy in seeing supremely vulnerable children heal, and flourish.

This is what the reign of God looks like, and it is amazing to have even a bit part in God's great drama of redemption. (To get a glimpse of the ongoing work, and an opportunity to join in, visit <https://violetschildrenshome.com/>)

Of course, not everything has been work. We have made many trips to enjoy our five grandchildren, under their guidance learning about important stuff like dinosaurs and the habits of unicorns. And this spring we took a long-deferred cross-country drive to see several glorious national parks, also stopping to enjoy lesser-known landmarks like the diner



serving the world's best strawberry rhubarb pie. (It really is, by the way!)

Along the way we spent a beautiful and thoughtful few days in Navajo tribal lands, where we were taught that the Hopi language does not have words for art or religion: these are not separate categories, but simply part of a whole and balanced life, in which creativity and devotion and ceremony are integrated aspects of healthy human being. I leave you with a poem called "Corn Grinding Song" by native Elizabeth Q White, that offers a sweet and simple vision of holiness embedded in the mundane.

Oh, for a heart as pure as pollen  
on corn blossoms,  
And for a life as sweet as honey  
gathered from the flowers,  
And beautiful as butterflies in  
sunshine.

May I do good, as Corn has  
done good for my people  
Through all the days that were.  
Until my task is done and  
evening falls,  
Oh, Mighty Spirit, hear my  
grinding song.

*(in No Turning Back)*







**ELLIOTT TRYSHAWN JONES**

Artistic Director of Just One Spirit Dance Ministry / Dancer / Choreographer  
Hometown: New Brunswick, NJ  
Master of Arts '20

“If you invest and trust the process of seminary life at Wesley, you will have the tools to bear fruit.”

**MB: What led you to seminary?**

EJ: Dance led me to seminary in 2016. At the age of 10, Claudia Gitelman introduced me to modern dance. I began my dance training with an after-school program called Art Matters. Art Matters was a modern dance program at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, to expose underprivileged youth to the art of modern dance. At 14, Michael Gary invited me to join his modern dance company, Acrodanse Theater Company. Acrodanse allowed me to meet people from different ethnic, social, economic, and religious backgrounds. My defining experience happened during Acrodanse's annual presentation of the Gospel Gala in

2001. Gospel Gala was an evening of worship through the art of dance, and a blind man stood up during our Q&A, saying, “I could not see the performance, but I felt the spirit.” I was the principal male dancer for Acrodanse for many years before I stopped dancing and relocated to Maryland. Ten years passed before I would dance again. In 2015, I auditioned and danced with Dancing by the Power Dance Company, where I met Wesley alum Dr. Josie Hoover. I danced my way to and through seminary.

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**MB: How did you learn about Wesley, and when did you know it was the right fit for you?**

EJ: I remember Dr. Hoover shared information about Wesley Theological Seminary with me as I shared with her about my life, my dance journey, and my goals for a dance ministry. She invited me to a Wesley open house event. After being on campus and taking a class, I felt something familiar; Wesley created the space for me to meet people from different ethnic, social, economic, and religious backgrounds.

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**MB: How did you decide on the Master of Arts degree?**

EJ: It allowed me to tailor my focus on worship, particularly dance, and the role of dance within the church’s structure, specifically the Black church. The Black church has always produced an environment for Black bodies to be free, but there’s a thin line between dance and worship.

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**MB: What was your experience learning and studying with individuals who worshiped differently from you?**

EJ: My experience learning and studying with individuals who worshiped differently from me was a unique growth with a multi-faceted level. I enjoy being in a space where being different is the norm. The knowledge production from Wesley’s classrooms was often dynamic and generative.

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**MB: What did you learn about yourself as you advanced through the program?**

EJ: I learned many lessons, but the one that advanced me through my program was the concept of process. Everything is a process. Moreover, the process is a process, and through my seminary process, I learned that my connection with dance and movement gave me a better sense of my value toward scripture. I became more invested with dance as worship being a part of the same discussion (dance can be worship, and worship can be dance). I moved from reading scripture as static text to reading scripture as a movement in the living word. Through the advancement of my program, I began to exegete scripture to extract movement. I learned that my theology is a theology of movement rooted in liberation theology.

---

**MB: How has your degree helped you advance your ministry goals?**

EJ: The *200 Years of Returns* celebration in partnership with Colonial Williamsburg took place the weekend of Saturday, July 2, 2022, and marked 200 years since the first Black Americans settled in Liberia through the American Colonization Society. A project inspired by Black merchant Paul Cuffee’s repatriation journey to Sierra Leone in 1815 and catalyzed by New Jersey’s Robert Finley in 1822 that would result in

what is arguably the earliest historical site of Black American liberation. *200 Years of Returns* is a collaboration between Burning Barriers Building Bridges (more commonly known as B4 Youth Theatre in Liberia), the Museum Theatre Department of Colonial Williamsburg (CW) in Virginia, United States, and Just One Spirit Dance Ministry with the Angels of Praise of Baltimore, Maryland. This interactive performance juxtaposes past and present “returns” to Liberia since 1822 when Black American settlers first encountered various African ethnic groups.

A team of seven dancers from Just One Spirit Dance Ministry with the Angels of Praise and five actors from B4 Youth Theatre in Liberia shared the stage with actors from CW Virginia at Hennage Auditorium in the Colonial Williamsburg Arts Museum to commemorate the *200 Years of Returns* anniversary. In December, as a continuation of *200 Years of Returns*, Just One Spirit and Angels of Praise will travel with B4 Youth Theatre and the Colonial Williamsburg theatre program to Liberia, West Africa, to celebrate *200 Years of Returns*.

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**MB: What was one of the best things about attending Wesley?**

EJ: Its diversity.

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**MB: What advice would you give someone who wants to attend seminary and Wesley?**

EJ: Speed bumps are a part of the process. Seminary is a space where you can and should ask all your questions to formulate more questions. At Wesley, there are many different levels of perspectives and understandings. Wesley offers something for everyone.





2023

ANNUAL REPORT

# FACTS AND FIGURES



graduates in the 141st graduating class, including a mother and daughter.



different Christian denominations and other cherished religious traditions were represented in the Class of 2023.



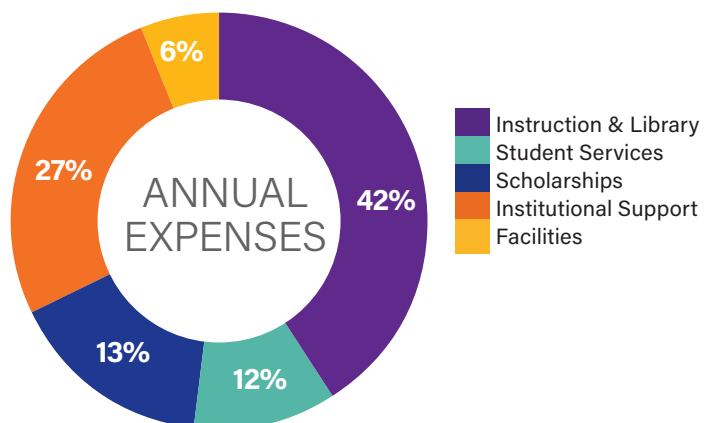
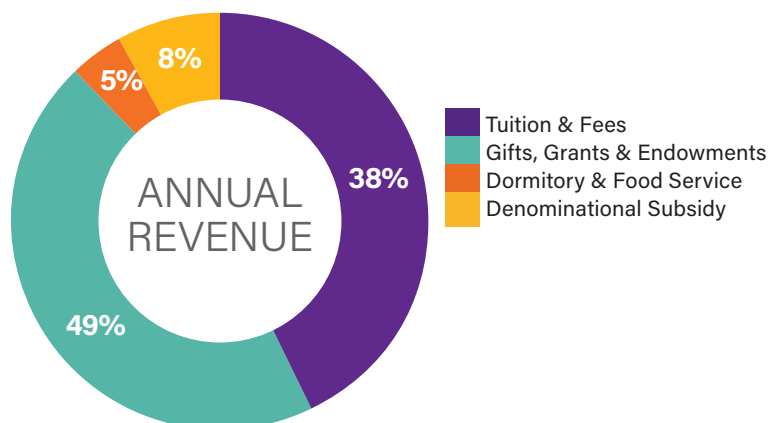
countries represented include the United States, Hungary, Kenya, South Korea, Liberia, Mexico, Sweden, and Zimbabwe.



military chaplains received their diplomas from around the world, including NATO countries supporting Ukraine.

## 2023 REVENUE AND EXPENSES

Fiscal Year is July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023





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## NOTE TO OUR DONORS

Class years indicate when a graduate received a degree from Wesley.

\* Indicates a donor who passed this fiscal year.

Did we miss your name? We made every effort to ensure the accuracy of our Annual Report. Donor lists include gifts made from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023. If we made an error, please accept our apologies and contact us at 202-885-8630 so we may correct our records.



# 30th Korean Endowment

## 한인 영구 장학재단 설립

### SOMETHING FROM NOTHING BY THE GRACE OF GOD: Thirty Years of the Korean Endowment



Thirty years ago, Rev. Dr. Kyunglim Shin Lee gathered a determined group of supporters to establish Wesley's Korean Endowment Scholarships. At that time, there were only a few Korean students attending Wesley, but Dr. Shin Lee was serving as the Dean of Students, and her passion and energy for international theological education became an important part of Wesley's growing Korean connections.

Since 1993, the Korean Endowment Scholarships have supported Korean and Korean-American master's level students in preparation for ministry, helping to fulfill Wesley's mission of educating clergy for the future. The scholarships are funded through individual gifts, donations from Korean and Korean-American congregations, and contributions from many Wesley alumni in both America and Korea.

The National Korean United Methodist Church of Washington, D.C., has been a supporter of the Endowment since the beginning. In 1994, each member pledged \$120, and five years later, the congregation contributed \$15,000—a full "unit," creating their own scholarship. As of this year, the Endowment has received 160 units, totaling nearly two and a half million dollars.

Over the course of 30 years, several hundred students have received financial aid through the Endowment, allowing them to focus fully on their studies without financial concern for living expenses or supporting their families. Yein Kim, a 2023 Master of Arts graduate, received a scholarship in her second year of study at Wesley. She had worked as a graphic designer in Korea before enrolling, to save money for living expenses. But even with those savings



# Anniversary nt Scholarship Celebration

립 30주년 축제 2023년 4월 23일



and income from working two on-campus jobs during her first year, money was tight.

The Endowment scholarship allowed Kim to spend her second year focused exclusively on her studies, not worrying about how she would pay for rent or groceries. "I am thankful," Kim says, "to God and Dr. Shin Lee and the donors who supported this scholarship that enables Korean students like me to study without concern about money."

Because there are regulations for where and how international students are allowed to work while living in the country on student visas, the scholarships are essential in alleviating financial worries. This support is important during students' time at Wesley, as well as helping them up to enter ministry on solid financial footing. Of the hundreds of Endowment scholarship recipients, around half currently serve congregations in the

United States and half are serving churches in Korea. Trans-generational students who receive the scholarship agree to serve Korean-American congregations for three years after they graduate from Wesley.

The 2022–2023 academic year was the first time that every Korean and Korean-American student enrolled at Wesley was awarded a scholarship, a testament to both the vitality of the Endowment and the gifts of the student body. At the 30th Anniversary Korean Endowment Scholarship award banquet last spring, Wesley President David McAllister-Wilson characterized the Endowment as a gift of the grace of God: "We are a group of people who believe that something comes from nothing by the grace of God," he said. "The Endowment is a testament to that: something from nothing by the grace of God. All the students who are now in

ministry, and weren't before: something from nothing by the grace of God."

Today, Dr. Shin Lee serves as the Vice President for International Relations. The Korean Endowment Scholarship is only one small part of her responsibilities. Thirty years after establishing the Endowment, she is still a champion of its impact, and she delights in its growth. Three decades in, both the Endowment and the Korean student body have grown. Last year, the child of a former scholarship recipient received a scholarship himself. The Endowment has become a thriving, sustainable fund, supporting multiple generations of Korean and Korean-American ministers. Wesley's mission of educating clergy for the future is being fulfilled through the Endowment from generation to generation.



# KOREAN ENDOWMENT FUND

**Wesley Theological Seminary, in cooperation with the Korean Wesley Foundation, is building an endowed fund to provide scholarship assistance for those called to serve Korean and Korean-American churches. We give thanks for all gifts to this special fund.**

**The following are scholarships, donated in memory or in honor of, for which gifts were made during the past fiscal year.**

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Moonbong Foundation: Mr. Byung Hak Kim and Mrs. Eunja Kim in honor of Minjung Kang  
Harvest Korean Methodist Church

**The following are scholarships, donated in memory or in honor of, for which one or more units of \$15,000 have been completed through 2023. Multiple \$15,000 units are indicated in parentheses.**

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**We give thanks for the witness and faith of those who have been honored with gifts in support of Wesley's life and mission.**

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**We give thanks for the life and faith of those who have been memorialized with gifts to support Wesley's enduring mission.**

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 McKinley  
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 Rudy L. Smith, '72  
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 E. Allen Stewart, '77 and Angelica Knight Stewart, '22  
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 Sandra S. W. Taylor, '82  
 Robert M. Terhune, '67 and Hazel Terhune, '66  
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 Andrea Titcomb, '92  
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 James L. Harrison, '66  
 Linda Sue Harrison, '04  
 Thomas E. Hart, '70  
 Kenneth B. Hawes, '94  
 William F. Hawes, '01  
 Calvin D. Hawkins, '74  
 Rowland Hearn and Louise Hearn  
 Harriet Celeste Heath, '93, '09  
 Gerry E. Hendershot  
 Harry C. Hendrickson  
 Paul Herman  
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 H. Beecher Hicks, Jr. and Elizabeth Harrison  
 Hicks  
 Hiss United Methodist Church  
 Ashley Bernard Hoover, '08 and Josetta  
 Roxanne Hoover, '08, '15  
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 Hattie Sanders Jackson, '90  
 Melvin A. Jackson, '07  
 Mary E. Jacobson, '79  
 Roberta Jauchem  
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 Emmett B. Johnson, '83 and Elizabeth L. Johnson, '83  
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 Alveta S. Jones  
 David Jones  
 Helen R. Jones  
 Joye F. Jones, '95  
 Virginia Trask Jones-Newton, '01  
 Joanne D. Jordan, '96  
 The Estate of Mary Elizabeth McGehee Joyce  
 Yong-Jai Jun and Jennie Jung-Won Huh Jun  
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 Robert P. Kelley  
 Vicki René Kemper, '07  
 Jane Fisher Khoury, '08  
 Carol A. Killian, '87  
 Bishop Chung Suk Kim and Jeong Hee Han  
 Danny C. Kim  
 Kyung-Rae Kim and Mi Lan Han  
 Taek Han Kim, '00  
 Keary Charles Kincannon, '81, '15 and Judy Borsher  
 Kathleen Elaine Kind, '01, '12  
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 The Estate of Roland Kircher  
 Alberta Kircher  
 Roland S. Kircher, Jr.  
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 Doyle Klinger, Jr., '73  
 Nancy V. Knowles-Tuell  
 The Estate of Ruth E. Koester  
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 Robert F. Kohler, '04  
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 Korean United Methodist Church of South Florida  
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 Kwanglim Methodist Church  
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 Janet Larner, '81, '84, '07  
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 Evelyn P. Lintern, '96  
 Kenneth D. Loss, '88  
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 Marcus Matthews, '74 and Barbara Matthews  
 Mary Witherspoon Matthews, '98  
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 Robert G. Mayers  
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 Ramona McClatchey  
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 Vollie Melson and Maggie Melson  
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 William C. Miller, Jr., '70  
 Sigrid P. Milner, '95 and John Rowland  
 The Estate of Eleanor White Mintener  
 Darrell V. Mitchell, '55  
 Jane Ann Mitchell, '97, '07  
 Charles R. Montgomery  
 Dai-Ok Moon and Sunnie Moon  
 Kathryn L. Bailey Moore, '94  
 The Estate of H.G. and Kathryn Morrison  
 Robin Johnson Moscati, '04  
 Mary Clark Moschella and Douglas L. Clark  
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 Karen L. Munson  
 Marianne Kehoe Nassef, '99, '23  
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 Jackie Nelson  
 Melvin Newcomer and Patricia Newcomer  
 The Estate of Helen P. Niederfrank  
 Elizabeth Jean Norcross, '05, '11 and Clint Stretch  
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 Amy Oden  
 Yoshiko Oishi Weick and Robert Weick  
 Marilee Ostman  
 Vivian W. Otto  
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 Michael K. Owens, '03  
 Choong Hyun Park and Youngsook Cho Park  
 John S. Park, '59 and Mary Jane Park  
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 Constance Alwine Paulson, '84 and Wesley Paulson  
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 Cecil-Ray Penn, '73  
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 Ida Powell  
 Diane Powers and Richard E. Powers, Jr.  
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 Providence-Fort Washington United  
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 Charles Raasch and Sandy Johnson Raasch  
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 H. Barcelo, '01  
 Kathy Richards  
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 Frenika Desiree Rivers, '13  
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 Thomas C. Roe and Carolyn Roe  
 Nancy Rosan  
 David O. Rose and Debra Rose  
 John David Rowe, '88  
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 Michael S. Russell, '80, '84  
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 Norman A. Sabin, '58  
 Salem United Methodist Women  
 Salisbury Korean United Methodist Church  
 L. Curtis Saville, '52  
 Margaretha N. Sawyer  
 Jay A. Saxe, '60 and Nancy Saxe  
 Ellen Scarborough  
 Carole Schauer  
 Rebecca W. Scheirer, '01, '11 and John  
 Scherier  
 Suzanne Schmidt, '11 and Daniel Davis  
 Cynthia Kay Schneider, '04  
 Cynthia P. Schneider and Thomas J.  
 Schneider  
 Olivia Schwartz and Tommy Schwartz  
 Corinne Scott  
 Walter Seek and Helen T. Seek  
 Joan Ilene Senyk, '94  
 Severna Park United Methodist Church  
 Wray Sexson and Roma Sexson  
 Ora L. Shaver  
 Amy Shelton and Richard Shelton  
 Mildred Shipley  
 Bonnie L. Shively, '97

Raymond C. Shockley  
 Gaye V. Simpkins  
 Helen L. Simpson  
 Patricia Sink  
 Mike Sipple and Patti Sipple  
 Paul Sisco  
 Cindy Skarbek and Edward F. Skarbek  
 Sandra Slazer, '99  
 Errol G. Smith, '62, '73  
 Theodore Smith, '96 and Teresa Kay Signer  
 Smith, '06  
 The Estate of Wayne H. Smithey  
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 Amanda M. D. Stein, '98, '16  
 Bishop Sandra Lynn Steiner Ball, '03 and  
 Barry Douglas Steiner Ball, '17  
 Mary Susan Steiner Conway  
 Melvin F. Stephan, '76  
 John C. Stewart, '77  
 Sue Garber Stewart  
 Carole K. Stockberger, '95  
 June R. Stowe and Eric Stowe  
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 Susan E. Swanson  
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 Mary Tawney Eastman  
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 Deborah Taylor, '09  
 Roy G. Taylor, '92  
 Melinda Thompson, '07  
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 Jacquelyn Thorpe, '86  
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 David W. Townsend  
 Barbara Turnbull  
 Viola Gentry Turner, '63  
 Lois F. Tyson  
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 Vale United Methodist Women  
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 Arsdale  
 The Estate of Fred L. Van Dolsen  
 Col. Donald A. Vantine, Ret.

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 James Gordon Vaughter, '09 and Elinor  
 Vaughter  
 James E. Victor, Jr., '09 and Vanessa Victor  
 Susan S. Vogel  
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 Sue A. Walters, '04 and Leroy Walters  
 Joel Leslie Walther, '11 and Megan Jo  
 Crumm Walther, '11  
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 Richard Avery Watson, '99  
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 Gerald L. Welsh, '60  
 J. William Werner, '69  
 Deborah Crenshaw Westbrook, '05 and  
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 Richard Wiley and Betty Wiley  
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 Jean H. Wilkerson  
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 Willhauck  
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 Delores Webb Williams  
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 Emily H. Womach  
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 Roberta Woodin  
 Carla Works and Nick J. Works, '13, '20  
 The Estate of Rena Wrenn  
 Amelia Wright  
 Rebecca Abts Wright, '76  
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 Hee Kyun Yang  
 Mun Sang Yi  
 Evan Young, '89, '96  
 Judy Smith Young, '04 and David Young  
 William D. Young, III, '67  
 Robert Zimmerli, '83  
 Charles H. Zimmerman, '74







The Class of 2023 made it through the COVID-19 Pandemic with creativity, fortitude, and grace. These students kept calm and carried on, Zooming in from across the country and around the world. Indeed, for many of them, this is their first time physically together with each other and their professors.

—President David McAllister-Wilson





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## 5 to 9 Years

David J. Abbott, '08  
Kuruvilla Abraham, Jr.  
Kay E. Adair  
Todd Andrew Adams, '07  
Douglas H. Aeilts  
Kevin Jerome Agee, '90 and Gwendolyn Jean Agee  
Sei Hyun Ahn and Eunsook Ahn  
David S. Akridge  
Frank Alegria  
Martha Ann Alexander, '98  
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Jana Lynn Almeida, '03  
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Rochelle Andrews, '18  
Timothy Ang, '74 and Lucille Jamin Ang, '74  
William C. Angerman  
Anthony H. Anikeeff and Tung-lin Wu  
Annandale United Methodist Church  
Cyrus Ansary and Jan Ansary  
Anyang Methodist Church  
Arcola Korean United Methodist Church  
Julie Arenstein  
Arlington Forest United Methodist Church  
The Estate of Clifford Armour  
Candace Susan Arnold, '02  
David G. Arnold, '99  
Malowe C. Ausen  
Marilyn R. Ayer, '08  
In Sook Bae  
Jai Soon Bae  
Sung Ho Bae and Kwang Bae  
Charles E. Bailey  
F. Bryan Bailey, Jr.  
Margaret I. Bailey  
Josephine C. Baker  
Baltimore-Washington Conference UMW  
Marilyn S. Barnard, '88  
Claudia F. Barnes  
Norma Barr  
Jennifer Barrett Siegal  
Samuel Barrow, Jr.  
The Estate of Rachel and H. Burton Bates  
Denise Parcelles Bates, '99  
Robert E. Bates, Jr.  
Charles L. Baughman, '86

Chris J. Beam  
Madeline Joyce Beighley  
The Estate of Elizabeth Rich Bell  
Andy Bender  
Sarah J. Benson, '96  
William F. Benter  
Fredericka Nolde Berger and Bruce Berger  
Lynn A. Bergfalk, '93  
Louise T. Berry  
Nancy Ruth Best, '99  
Bell A. Beverlee, '89  
Frederick B. Binkley, '74  
John Bixler  
Clara Faulkner Bliss  
Jeanette Marie Block, '06 and Ronald M Block  
Robert L. Boettner, '71  
Mitchell E. Bond, '92  
John Alex Kobina Bonful, '90, '93  
Scott Howard Bostic, '16 and Anna Jo Bostic, '19  
Ethel Canty Bothuel, '02, '08  
Bernard L. Bottoms  
Theodore R. Bowen  
Susan Brack, '99  
Johnie Branch, '95  
Bryan L. Branson  
Robert T. Bridges and Candy Bridges  
Florence Fisackerly Brooks, '94 and N. Burton Brooks  
John Patrick Brown, Jr., Esq. and Anita Brown  
Katherine Elizabeth Brown, '06  
Kenneth E. Brown, '74  
Marianne Theresa Brown, '08  
Warner H. Brown, Jr., '74  
William G. Brown, '95 and Michelle Pahl Brown, '96  
Jo Ann Browning and Grainger Browning, Jr.  
Susan Carlson Browning, '13  
Jeanne Broyhill  
Thomas L. Brunkow, '82  
Dan C. Bryant, '90 and Debbie Bryant  
Bupyeong Methodist Church  
Mark A. Burgess, '79 and Ruth M. Burgess, '77  
Cynthia Horn Burkert, '03 and John Burkert  
The Estate of Ralph G. Burkhart  
Stephanie A. Burns, '03  
William Charles Burns, Jr.  
John Butchko  
A. Elwood Butler  
Kasongo Butler, '20  
Hoyt Paul Canady, III, '09  
Capitol Hill United Methodist Women

Kim K. Capps, '84  
The Estate of Janet H. Carew  
William T. Carnes  
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Marsha C. Carpenter, '96 and Charles Carpenter, '69  
Arlene R. Carr, '86  
Donald D. Carruth  
Jack W. Carter, '61  
Virgil E. Carter  
General James E. Cartwright, USMC (Ret.) and Sandee Cartwright  
Michael L. Case, '92  
Allen Cassity and Louise B. Alden Cassity  
Catholic University of America  
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Kyung Suk Chae  
Su Il Chae  
Melba Varner Chaney, '83  
Charlottesville District of the UMC  
Jalene Cynthia Chase, '04, '12  
Cherrydale UMW  
Kathleen Frances Cheyney, '93  
Een Shoon A. Cho  
Mi Ja Cho, '13  
Myung Hi Yun Cho  
Won Hyo Cho and Saung Sook Cho  
Hong Yul Choi  
Hyung Sook Choi  
Jason Sung Kul Choi  
Sung Yong Choi  
Young-Ae Choi  
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Jong-Joon Chun  
Chuncheon Myeongseong Methodist Church  
Chun-Hye Chung  
Nak Sang Chung  
Tai Jin Chung  
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Alexis Smith Coleman, '08  
Cynthia L. Coleman and David Reeves  
Larry L. Coleman, '70  
Marjorie Taylor Coleman, '88  
Berkeley D. Collins  
Joanne P. Comstock, '99  
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Concord-St. Andrews UMW  
 Rosalind Anita Conley, '10  
 Thomas N. Connar, '72, '83  
 Carol A. Cook Moore  
 The Estate of Marian Cooley  
 Josephine S. Cooper  
 Lisa A. Cooper and Nigel Green  
 Robert Ewell Cooper, '96, '04 and Francis T. Cooper  
 J. Elliott Corbett and Sarah Anne Corbett  
 Thomas C. Corbitt and Gloria S. Corbitt  
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 Carter Cortelyou, '90  
 Olivia R. Costango, '98  
 Charles D. Couch  
 Linda J. Coveleskie, '76  
 Kathleen Anne Cox and Alan Egge  
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 The Estate of Meredith P. Crawford  
 R. Frederick Crider, Jr., '75 and Diane A.W. Crider, '82  
 Clarafrancie Cromer Sowers, '13  
 Stephany Ellen Crosby, '01  
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 The Estate of Katherine Yeamans Cudlipp  
 Joseph W. Daniels, Jr., '00  
 Josephine Ann Daspro, '99  
 Bishop Leah Denyatta Daughtry, '12  
 Deryl Andrew Davis and Whitney Warren  
 H. Ray Davis, '58  
 Jackson Harvey Day, '67, '10  
 Sally Jo Day, '88  
 Cherie Lynn Dearth, '11  
 Joseph Ireland Delong, '99  
 Mary Elizabeth Dennis, '00, '11  
 Dennis W. Derr, '79  
 The Estate of Madeleine M. DeWolf  
 Edna C. Dismus, '00  
 John H. Ditto, Jr.  
 Paul Donelson, '75 and Linda J. Donelson, '75  
 Michael K. Doran, '15  
 Thomas J. Dougherty  
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 Dulin United Methodist Women  
 Sarah Duncan, '83, '88  
 Frank W. Dunton  
 Priscilla B. Durkin, '97  
 David E. Dutcher, '72 and Lois Dutcher  
 Elizabeth M. Dyre, '96  
 Ernest Dyson, '84  
 Bishop LaTrelle Miller Easterling  
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 Curtis Christian Ehrgott, '05 and Susan Ehrgott  
 David Eichelberger, '76  
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 V. Patrick Ellis, Sr.  
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 Emmarts United Methodist Women  
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 James Andrew Estes, '06  
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 Arthur Fellows  
 Tara Janine Fentress, '12  
 John T. Fesperman, Jr.  
 Ann E. Field  
 Charles E. Fine  
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 First Korean United Methodist Church  
 First Korean United Methodist Church  
 First UMC United Methodist Women  
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 Floris United Methodist Church  
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 Barry Scott Foster, '93 and Susan K. Foster  
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 Virginia Welsh Friedman, '09  
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 Janet Fujikawa, '09, '10, '13  
 John Wayne Fulton, '08  
 Pat A. Futato, '13  
 Katherine Gabbert  
 Charles Zacharias Gardner, '11 and Shannon Gardner  
 Robert Gardner and Karen Gardner  
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 Richard L. Gathro, '81  
 Herman Gay  
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 Blanche F. Greene  
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 Michael Grieff  
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 William A. Holmes and Nancy Holmes  
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James, '10  
Susan Dale Jamison, '84  
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Gui Jong Jeong and Eun Soon Kim  
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Emanuel Lee Johnson, '12  
Gabriele Johnson  
Hugh G. Johnson, '60  
Margaret E. Johnson  
Stuart Johnson and Leah A. Johnson  
Theon Lemure Johnson, III, '09  
William B. Johnson  
William E. Johnston, III and Barbara  
Johnston  
Bruce A. Jones, '06  
Jeanne-Renee Jones, '00  
Paulette V. Jones, '08  
Rockwell F. Jones and Melissa Lollar Jones  
LaMonde E. Jordan  
Sharon Gibson Judge and Thomas J. Judge  
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Charlene Payne Kammerer and Leigh  
Kammerer  
Mary Kathryn Kanahan, '09  
Hae Won Kang  
Mi Kyung Kang, '10  
Clarence A. Kaylor  
Evelyn G. Keever, '79  
The Estate of Mary Ruth Keisling  
Robert Edward Kells, Jr., '12  
The Family of Cliff and Camille Kendall  
Barbara A. Kenley, '98 and C. Robert Kenley  
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The Estate of Frances W. Kerr  
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Kester, '82, '84  
Arlene B. Kiely, '93  
Han Kil Kim  
Jang Sik Kim  
Julie Hae Won Kim and Shin Yong Kim  
Ki-Bok Kim, '70  
Yun Chol Kim  
Charles L. Kind, '98  
The Estate of Phyllis H. Kindley  
Daniel W. King, II, '79  
Laura Ellen King, '07  
Robert Samuel King, '14  
Wayne J. Kirk  
Dorothy Kirkley  
Scott T. Kisker and Roberta Kisker  
Donald L. Kjelleren  
Megan Gerard Klose, '14  
Nancy Klueh and Kenneth Klueh  
Robert A. Knebel, '76  
Moon S. Ko  
David F. Kolda, '66, '83  
Bon Sam Koo  
Leta Ann Kopp, '94, '05  
Korean Madisonville United Methodist  
Church  
Lelia Kreps  
The Estate of Beulah & Joseph Kruson  
Gerald F. Kuester, '03, '08  
KUMC of South Florida United Methodist  
Women  
Margaret T. Kutz, '76  
Jefferson S. Labala, '92 and Hilderia Labala  
Loretta Ann Lacy, '06  
Benjamin Ladner  
Pamela N. Lamborne  
Nancy Ann Lanman, '96  
Harold A. LaParl, '60  
Charles A. LaPointe  
T. K. Lau  
Easten Law, '14  
Asa Jerome Lee, '07 and Chenda D. Innis  
Lee, '08  
Chul Ho Lee and Jae Sook Lee  
Hyung S. Lee  
Jae Seong Lee, '19  
Jean H. Lee, '16 and Jay H. Lee  
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from July 1, 2022—June 30, 2023

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# LEAVING A LEGACY



*Pictured: Liz and Lowell VanBilliard (top) and Liz her Wesley advisor Mary Alice Edwards.*

## ALUMNA GIVES \$1.9 MILLION TO ESTABLISH THE VANBILLIARD COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Liz VanBilliard '62 and her husband Lowell were dedicated to helping others throughout their lives and even after their passing they will continue to support Wesley seminarians make an impact in their churches and communities through their generous scholarship fund at Wesley Theological Seminary.

Elizabeth (Liz) Cornell VanBilliard '62 grew up in a Methodist home and with a Methodist minister grandfather. As an only child, she never felt alone because youth from Central UMC of Endicott, New York were frequent visitors to the house. Participation in the life of the church was a way of life in the Cornell household: Grace (mother) served on the local and conference Board of Mission, Walter (dad) served on the Board of Directors at Sky Lake Camp & Retreat Center and chaired the Central Churches new building committee.

Liz played clarinet in the high school marching band and loved good music, especially classical. Liz attended National College in Kansas City, Missouri before transferring and graduating from West Virginia Wesleyan in Buckhannon, West Virginia with a degree in music. From there, Liz transferred to Wesley Theological Seminary and earned a master's in religious education in 1962.

Lowell VanBilliard grew up in a Christian home, the son of a bookkeeper (Vera) and a machinist and handyman father (Dan). Helping in the family business as a cashier and truck driver in Pennsylvania and New York, Lowell played saxophone in the high school band and was more interested in country music. Following high school, Lowell graduated from Rochester Institute of Technology with a degree in electrical engineering and later he earned a master's in business administration from George Washington University.

Liz and Lowell met in Washington, D.C. at a Christian singles party and married nine months later in October 1961 at the Wesley Oxnham Chapel. Liz's involvement with the Women's Guild developed into a passion for Asbury Methodist Village and its mission of caring. For many years, she shepherded her two children (Loann and Allen) and members of Hughes UMC children and youth, and scout troops to volunteer at Asbury to learn what sharing the joy, love, and fellowship means to others.

After Lowell's retirement and health decline, they moved to Asbury and participated in the many on-campus and off-campus activities throughout their many years there. One program that was close to their hearts was the Gaithersburg Beloved Community Initiative at Asbury. The priority of the program is to develop intergenerational relationships and community partnerships that promote social justice and help build resilience in and improve lives of children, youth, families and older adults.

It was through this work with Beloved Community that Liz connected with many of our Wesley seminarians while they served at Asbury. "It was quite touching," Loann shared. "When I was packing mom's home after she passed, I found dozens of letters from students thanking her for everything from advice to food to money for the Metro." It was this connection that inspired the scholarship.

The VanBilliard Community Engagement Scholarship Fund will be awarded annually starting the fall of 2023 and will consist of both tuition and a cash stipend. Preference will be given to women pursuing inter-generational, social justice, community engagement ministry. The hope is for this scholarship to bring people to Wesley who have a call to serve, but don't think they can afford a seminary education.

"With this gift, follow that nudge, that 'thing' you can't get rid of, the Word of the Holy Spirit coming out in you, whatever you choose to call it, go out and perform, with joy in your heart, the path or change you have made."

-Loann (VanBilliard) Burian

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If you would like to learn more about establishing a scholarship at Wesley Theological Seminary, please contact Vice President of Development Angela Willingham at 202-885-8617 or [awillingham@wesleyseminary.edu](mailto:awillingham@wesleyseminary.edu)



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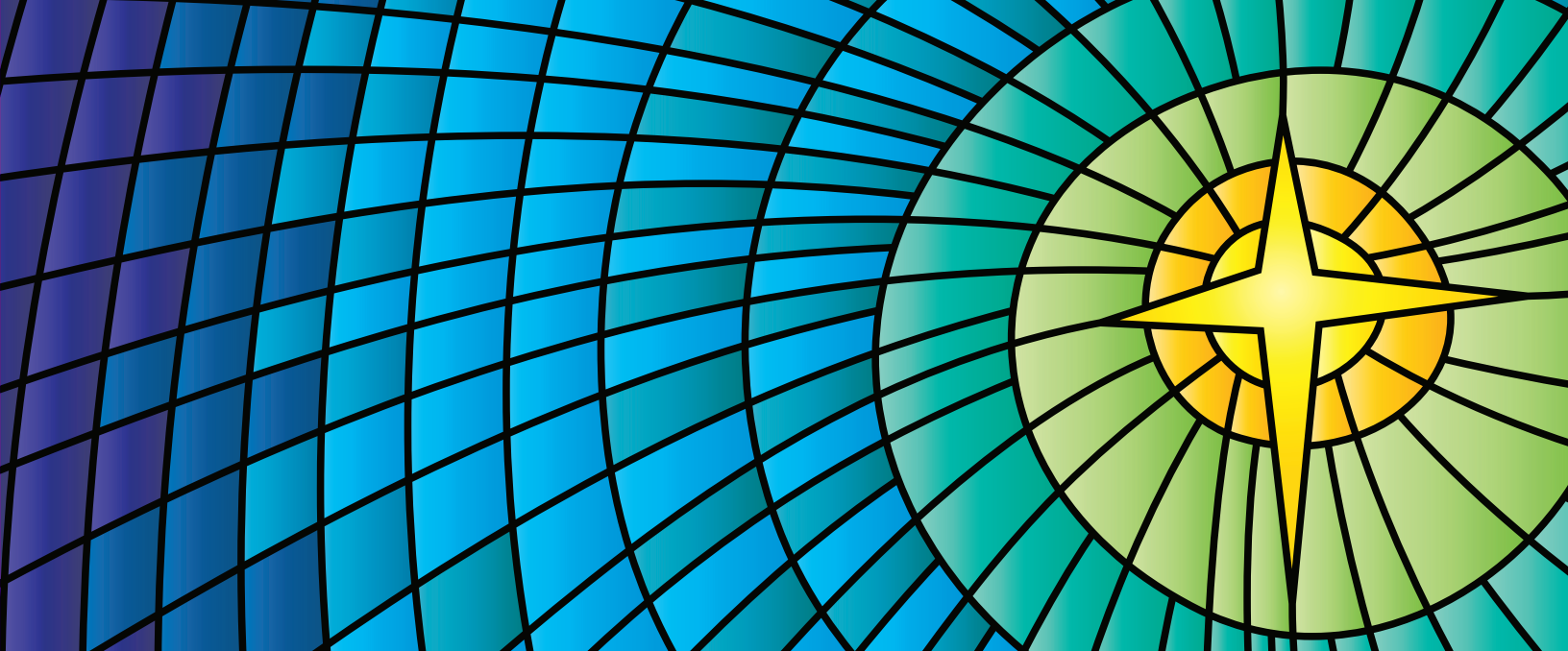
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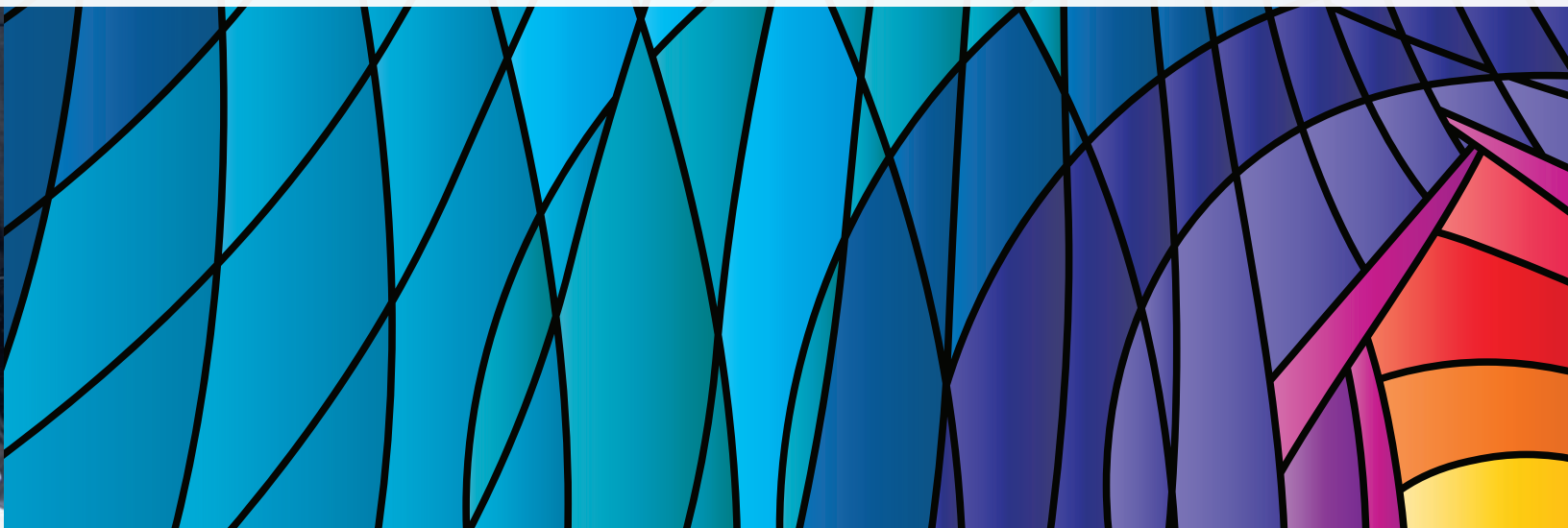




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