



May 26, 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WESLEY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY RECEIVES SCIENCE ENGAGEMENT FOR CONGREGATIONAL FLOURISHING GRANT FOR “THE BRAIN ON SOCIAL MEDIA” PROJECT

WASHINGTON, DC – Wesley Theological Seminary (Wesley DC) has received a grant through the Science Engagement for Congregational Flourishing Initiative of the American Association for the Advancement of Science’s Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religions (DoSER) program to support, “The Brain on Social Media,” a project exploring the intersections of brain science, social media, congregational life, and theological education.

Led by faculty members Dr. Michael Koppel and Dr. Hyemin Na, the initiative brings together scientists, congregational leaders, and theological educators into collaborative and critical engagement of the intersections between brain science and congregational ministries of worship, care, and outreach. The project will engage both the possibilities and challenges of social media for people of faith, while equipping future ministry leaders to respond thoughtfully to its growing influence.

“Social media creates new opportunities for connection, learning, and ministry, while also raising significant challenges for well-being and community life,” said Dr. Koppel, Howard Chandler Robbins Professor of Pastoral Theology and Congregational Care. “‘The Brain on Social Media’ will create space for deeper engagement with the science behind those realities and their implications for ministry.”

Dr. Na, Assistant Professor of Worship, Media, and Culture, emphasized the importance of theological reflection in a digitally connected world. “Faith communities are increasingly navigating questions around identity, belonging, mental well-being, and human flourishing in digital spaces,” Na said. “This initiative helps ministry leaders think critically and compassionately about how social media shapes the ways people relate to God, one another, and themselves.”

The project will foster congregational initiatives and educational programming that examine both the opportunities and pitfalls of social media, including its impact on community-building, isolation, learning, and spiritual development.

About the American Association for the Advancement of Science and DoSER

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) is the world’s largest general scientific society and publisher of the *Science* family of journals. The nonprofit is open to all and fulfills its mission to “advance science and serve society” through initiatives in science policy, international

programs, science education, public engagement, and more. Building upon its mission, AAAS established the Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion (DoSER) program in 1995 to facilitate communication between scientific and religious communities. For the latest information and news about AAA DoSER and the Science Engagement for Congregational Flourishing project, visit ScienceReligionDialogue.org, ScienceforSeminaries.org, and AAAS DoSER.

About Wesley Theological Seminary

Founded in 1882, Wesley Theological Seminary is seated in the nation's capital and centered in the Christian faith; it annually prepares more than 1,000 students representing more than 30 denominations to become exemplary teachers, preachers, and leaders in the world today. Wesley graduates are in ministry in all 50 states and 20 countries as leaders of churches and service organizations. The mission of Wesley Theological Seminary is to prepare Christians for leadership in the church and the world, to advance theological scholarship, and to model a prophetic voice in the public square.

Media Contact

Lyvonne Briggs

Director of Strategic Marketing and Communications | 202-885-8657 | lbriggs@wesleyseminary.edu