

# THE GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

<http://www.gts.edu>

The General Theological Seminary is an Episcopal institution called to educate and form leaders for the church in a changing world.

- Mission statement approved by the Board of Trustees, May 1999

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## SUMMARY

An atmosphere of anticipation and excitement characterizes The General Theological Seminary (GTS), which is in the midst of a renewal of programs, facilities, relations with the wider church, and financial capabilities. Following the withdrawal of the Church Center from the plans to relocate to the campus of the Seminary, and building on studies completed to develop that proposal, GTS moved forward with plans to develop an education center on the Close, to renew the century-old buildings that compose much of the physical plant, and to inaugurate programs that respond to the needs of the church today.

## A PROCESS OF RENEWAL

Founded in 1817 by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, General Seminary continues to provide leadership that reflects our unique heritage within the Episcopal Church. In 1999 under the leadership of the new Dean, the Very Rev. Ward B. Ewing, GTS began a process that has resulted in the reorganization of the Board of

Trustees, an evaluation of the educational needs of the Church in the twenty-first century, and the development of facilities and programs to meet these needs. As part of this strategic planning, in the fall of 2003, following a year of study with a consultant, the Board of Trustees reorganized to become more collaborative with the faculty and more informed and capable for appropriate decision making. In October, 2005, the Rev. Denis O'Pray, Rector of Church of Our Saviour, San Gabriel, California, was elected Chair of the Board, following the outstanding leadership of the Very Rev. Robert Giannini, retired dean of Christ Church Cathedral, Indianapolis, who has been instrumental in moving the Seminary forward in its strategic initiatives. The academic program has been strengthened by enhancing the role of the Sub-Dean (the academic dean) and recruiting the Rev. Dr. Titus Presler to this new position. Empowering yet more comprehensive renewal is the development of a plan to replace our library and administration building with a new facility that will house the library, the administration, and the faculty, and will provide additional income (above the cost of construction) through market-rate co-op apartments. In all, General Seminary aims to become the seminary for the whole church, not merely as a consequence of its history, but through active engagement with the wider church for the formation and education of leaders for the church in our changing world.

### **PROGRAMS AND THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

The Seminary's central program continues to be the M.Div., primarily for the education and formation for those seeking ordination in the Episcopal Church. M.Div. enrollment continues to be full, with students from over forty dioceses and two Lutheran Synods. 50 percent of the students are under the age of thirty-five. General continues its long tradition of supporting theological education through significant financial aid; last year GTS scholarships funded 33 percent of tuition and fees for all programs, including the Center for Christian Spirituality and advance degree programs. Approximately two-thirds of all M.Div. students receive assistance.

*The Programa Hispano/Latino de Teología y Pastoral*—a fully accredited M.Div. program in Spanish, primarily for persons whose first language is Spanish—was begun four years ago, and having graduated its first student in 2005, will graduate four more this year. This flexible M.Div. program responds to the urgent need in the Episcopal Church for Hispanic clergy, especially in urban areas. Directed by the Rev. Canon Juan M. C. Oliver, the *Programa* is supported through partnerships with the Episcopal Dioceses of New York, Long Island, New Jersey, Newark, and Connecticut as well the Metropolitan New York and the New Jersey Synods of the ELCA.

The need for well-trained lay leaders for the church is a growing imperative. Three years ago the Seminary redesigned the Master of Arts program to be more flexible and more focused on the needs of lay ministry. With enrollment now at twenty students, this two-year program that offers degrees in Christian Spirituality, Biblical Studies, and Anglican Studies is responding to this need. At present the Seminary is assessing how to make the M.A. more flexible and more directly applicable to particular lay ministries like Christian education, parish administration, and spiritual direction.

GTS is the only Episcopal Seminary that offers an academic Th.D. In the fall of 2005, the Episcopal Church Foundation provided a planning grant to bring together faculty from GTS, Virginia Seminary, and Episcopal Divinity School to explore how we might strengthen this important program for the Anglican Communion by working collaboratively using innovative learning technologies. The need for well-trained academic leaders for the church is a request we hear frequently from our brothers and sisters in the two-thirds world.

### **THE DESMOND TUTU EDUCATION CENTER**

The need for an education and conference center on the Close of the Seminary has been confirmed by both internal and external studies. Construction on the center, which will be housed in three restored 19th century buildings, began in the fall of 2005 and will be completed in late summer, 2007. This modern conference facility will provide sixty guest rooms, state-of-the-art meeting spaces, and dining in the Seminary refectory. It is designed to serve the Seminary programs, other church-related institutions, and non-profit organizations at below market rates.

Named for Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who was a visiting professor at GTS when he received the Nobel Peace Prize, this education center will provide meeting and conference space for four GTS learning centers.

- The Center for Peace and Reconciliation will focus on issues of reconciliation in all areas of human relationship—personal, parish, community, national, and international. We have received a \$1 million gift from the Procter Fund of the Diocese of Southern Ohio to endow a chair in the area of Church and Society in honor of Bishop Herbert Thompson. The holder of this chair will also serve as Director of the Center for Peace and Reconciliation.
- The Center for Christian Spirituality, created at GTS in 1976 and currently under the leadership of Dr. Jonathan Linman, who also serves as Associate Professor of Ascetical Theology, offers courses in the regular terms, during the January inter-term, and during the summer. They will use the new facility to provide conferences, lectures, and seminars at other times of the year. The connection between spirituality and the ability to witness for justice and reconciliation epitomizes Archbishop Tutu and will be a central focus of the education center.
- The Center for Continuing Education is a new initiative that will provide courses, conferences, training, and seminars for ordained and lay ministers focusing on urban ministry and congregational leadership and development. The Associate Alumni/ae of the Seminary have accepted the goal of raising \$1 million to endow a professorship for Christian Education whose duties will include serving as director for this center.
- The Center for Jewish-Christian Studies and Relations created at General 19 years ago, will expand its offerings as the church seeks to minister in a multi-cultural, multi-faith world. This center along with the three other centers will tap the abundant resources of New York City.

### **LEADERS FOR THE CHURCH CAPITAL CAMPAIGN**

In September, 2005 at a gala event attended by approximately 400 persons and featuring Archbishop Tutu together with Bishop Herbert Thompson and the well-known actor Sam Waterston, General Seminary launched the public phase of the Leaders for the Church Capital Campaign and celebrated the beginning of construction of the Desmond Tutu Education Center. Begun in May, 2002 this five-year capital campaign with a goal of \$15 million is the largest campaign in the Seminary's history. The moneys raised will be used to provide funds for the construction of the education center, to add to the endowment for the support of faculty and financial aid, and to support annual operations. At the end of 2005, the total received was just under \$13 million. In addition to the \$1 million grant from the Procter Fund, we have received \$1 million from Trinity Church Wall Street to honor their Rector (now retired), Daniel P. Matthews, \$1 million from the Porter family foundation to endow the chair in liturgics in the name of H. Boone Porter Jr., the first liturgics professor at General, and an unrestricted, anonymous gift of \$1 million. After the September gala, the students inaugurated a campaign that received a gift or pledge from every full-time student and many part-time students, raising a total of over \$110,000! The enthusiasm being generated by this campaign and the programs it represents leads the Seminary to believe it will exceed the \$15 million goal.

### **THE REDEVELOPMENT OF CHELSEA SQUARE**

In addition to the plans underway for the Education Center, work has also begun that will lead to the restoration and remodeling of General's 19th century campus. Serious structural and life-safety concerns have ended the usefulness of the forty-year-old, architecturally undistinguished building that serves as the entrance to the Close from Ninth Avenue. Following years of planning and negotiation, in the spring of 2005 the Seminary signed a contract with a developer to replace this facility with a new structure that will recreate the architectural harmony of the Seminary Close, provide a new office complex for the faculty, unite administrative offices on a single floor, and house the distinguished St. Mark's Library. Additional residential floors will generate revenue that will finance the ongoing restoration and preservation of the entire campus. Designed by the internationally known firm of Polshek Partnership, the Seminary is presently seeking the necessary permits for construction.

## APPOINTMENTS

In June, 2005 the Rev. Dr. Titus Presler left the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest to accept the re-configured position of Sub-Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs at GTS. Dr. Presler also serves as Professor of Mission and World Christianity. He brings to the Seminary strong experience in world mission, an impressive academic resume, and years of service as a parish priest. He will strengthen the academic office, providing support for current programs and leadership for the development of the programs that will be housed in the Desmond Tutu Education Center.

There were two other senior appointments. The Rev. Dr. Ellen Sloan began service as the Chaplain and Director for Community Life in the spring of 2005. Before attending seminary Dr. Sloan served on the education faculty of the University of Connecticut. In the 1980s she also served overseas in Venezuela and the Netherlands. She came to General from a parish in the Diocese of Newark. Mr. Bruce Smith accepted the position of Associate Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Alumni/ae Relations in January, 2006. Mr. Smith comes to this position following four years of service in the Development Office of the Seminary. He brings experience from congregational stewardship campaigns as well as the skills of a professional writer.

In the fall of 2004, General Seminary was re-accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. The re-accreditation visit by the ATS followed a year-long self-study led by Dr. R. Bruce Mullin, Sub-Dean and SPRL Professor of History and World Mission and Professor of Modern Anglican Studies. General received the re-accreditation without any negative notation.

## CONCLUSION

At the center of the campus—both physically and spiritually—of The General Theological Seminary is found the Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Both spiritual growth and outstanding scholarship are central in the preparation of students at GTS. We seek to form leaders who are secure in the knowledge of God's love for every person, who are grounded in the traditions of the church yet open to change in our world, who provide collaborative leadership to build communities that have a vision for the future, and who are able to move forward even in the midst of great challenges. As the Seminary is itself in the midst of renewal and redevelopment for the future, so we find ourselves uniquely situated to raise up leaders for the Church who will be part of the revitalizing and rekindling of the mission and vision of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.

Respectfully submitted,  
The Very Rev. Ward B. Ewing  
Dean and President