

BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Summary of Work

Mandate: To prepare men and women for both lay and ordained ministry in the Church.

Established by resolution in 1817, the General Theological Seminary was the first seminary of The Episcopal Church and the only one founded by the General Convention. In 1827, General moved to its current location on farm land given by Clement Clarke Moore, who was a parishioner at Trinity, Wall Street. The establishment of General Seminary gave rise to the neighborhood of Chelsea, currently one of the most vibrant neighborhoods in New York City. It was the express decision of the Convention that the Seminary be in New York City, and General's location remains an essential aspect of its character and mission. Throughout its 198 years, in good times and bad, General has had an unwavering commitment to outstanding academic achievement and continues that tradition today.

Shortly after General Convention in 2012, General Seminary completed *The Plan to Choose Life*, a restructuring strategy that lifted the Seminary out of its immediate financial crisis and into a place where it is now debt-free and continues to build its endowment. In the years since then, the annual operating deficit has been reduced substantially, and General is even closer to operating with a balanced budget. The Seminary's assets currently include an operating reserve that gives it time to achieve this goal. There are still financial challenges to be faced, but through rigorous fiscal discipline and a refreshed outlook on seminary education, General Seminary is in a position to meet these challenges.

In 2013, the Board of Trustees elected The Very Rev. Kurt H. Dunkle as the 13th Dean and President. This action reunited the two roles, which had been separated during the focus on the financial future of the Seminary. Dean Dunkle has brought a renewed perspective to General. "We are the seminary for the entire church, not just one aspect or discrete group," he said upon his election. "We need to embrace the meaning and importance of being The *General* Theological Seminary in preparing for the leadership of the entire church."

Under Dean Dunkle's leadership, General Seminary is addressing, head-on, the changing world and the changing Church. This rapid reshaping has not been without some disruption — change is always painful, but it is essential to ensure the viability of General. We know that others in the seminary system are struggling with many of the same issues.

A core component of General's new outlook is the implementation of *The Way of Wisdom*, which includes *The Wisdom Year*. Announced in spring 2014, *The Way of Wisdom* integrates all disciplines of formation in seminary education rather than separating academics, training, and experience. *The Way of Wisdom* inspires students to interpret and learn from every aspect of their time in seminary — from Chapel service and classes to parish ministry and the experience of living in New York City. Visiting experts offer lectures and workshops that help students to hone, throughout their three years at General, such real-world ministry skills as financial management, stewardship, and pastoral leadership.

The components of discipline integration have already begun, and some students are already working in a pilot of *The Wisdom Year*, a new form of practical training that will allow General graduates to "hit the ground running" at their job placements in the real world.

In their final year, *The Wisdom Year*, MDiv students synthesize their entire seminary education through practical experience that goes beyond field placement by placing the student at a real-world, paid, part-time

position in a ministry setting. The students are given support, mentoring, and tools to connect this experience to their academic pursuits on campus. In a single move, General Seminary is creating an environment that goes well beyond knowledge while wading into *wisdom*, reducing the cost of seminary tuition and housing by one-third, and meeting the growing need of the 400 Episcopal churches in the area for eager, theologically trained pastors and leaders on a rotating basis.

The program began its pilot year in fall 2014 with the placement of two MDiv seniors in paid, part-time positions at parishes in General's wide geographic reach. In fall 2015 the pilot program will expand, allowing current students the option to participate and providing new students with the full three-year *Way of Wisdom* program, which culminates with *The Wisdom Year*.

The Church responded to the announcement of *The Way of Wisdom* with a vote of approval and support by sending students to General. The Seminary's fall 2014 incoming class of 34 was the largest seen in several years. At their February 2015 meeting, the trustees of General Seminary also affirmed *The Way of Wisdom* and *The Wisdom Year* as a creative and effective response to the needs of the 21st-century Episcopal Church. The Board also discussed how to advance the core programming to effectively implement the *Wisdom* curriculum and formation.

You are invited to find out more about *The Way of Wisdom* at <http://www.gts.edu/wisdom>.

Through *The Plan to Choose Life* and the recent additions to its core program, General Seminary now has renewed buildings, renewed programs, and renewed finances; and is now able to utilize these to support the good work it has been doing for 198 years. In this process, General Seminary seeks to add to its commitment to outstanding academic achievement those things necessary for leadership in the changing Church.

In two years, The General Theological Seminary will be marking 200 years since its establishment by General Convention. Having weathered the financial restructuring, and in working through disruptions that result from rapid changes, the Seminary is in a position to adapt seminary education to a changing Church and to continue serving the Church for the next 200 years and beyond.