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Mandate

Mission Statement: Educating and forming lay and ordained leaders for the church in a changing world. Adopted, Board of Trustees, 1999; affirmed October 23, 2015 and May 15, 2019.

Summary of Work

Narrative

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 farmland 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. The seminary defines its ethos as urban, Anglican, Benedictine, and contextual.

Since 2018, we have identified and focused on four strategic pillars to strengthen our mission. First, refining ordination-track programs to respond to the changing needs of the church and the world. The second pillar is to develop vocationally focused degree and certificate programs useful to the wider church and the world. Thirdly, the seminary seeks out and embraces mutually beneficial partnerships and affiliations of all types. The fourth and final pillar has been to engage in a major gifts initiative for the preservation and refreshment of the Chapel of the Good Shepherd as well as initiatives to endow scholarships, programs, and faculty positions.

Over the past four years (2018-2022), General Seminary eliminated its \$3 million annual structured deficit and all debt. The seminary has maintained a balanced budget, and the endowment has grown steadily. The draw rate has continued to decrease, now at 4.9%. Annual giving remains strong.

After receiving reaccreditation (without notations) in 2017, we have continuously refined the curriculum to attract both lay and ordination-track students and students interested in advanced ministerial education. We have designed, received accreditation for, and successfully launched two new degrees: the Master of Arts in Ministry (2018) and the Doctor of Ministry (2019).

In order to develop an engaged and active Board of Trustees, we have successfully reduced its membership from 42 to fewer than 30. Attendance at meetings and engagement in the life of the seminary is steadily increasing.

Alumni involvement has increased with a revitalized Alumni Executive Committee. The emerging focus of ‘volunteer-led, staff-supported’ alumni events is taking root. One example is the celebration of “50 Years of Women at General” in the 2021-2022 academic year (memorializing the 50th anniversary of the matriculation of women onto degree programs). This important milestone will be commemorated with key seminary events and initiatives which celebrate the lasting contributions made by women and non-binary persons to the seminary and the Church.

In response to our increasing awareness of systemic and institutionalized racism, we have taken several steps in the right direction. Under the leadership of Michael Battle, the Desmond Tutu Center has expanded its role in the seminary community in a variety of ways, including the refined approach to community-wide anti-racism training. These trainings have incorporated the Ubuntu Circle methodology and the work of Willie James Jennings, particularly *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging*.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the seminary pivoted to remote learning, incorporating practices, technologies and pedagogies that were already in place. Not without minor challenges, the dexterity of the faculty and the patience of our students helped the seminary to recognize more fully the value of a hybrid model of education, something which we intend to develop more fully as we head into the future.

As a reflection of our third strategic pillar (“Partnerships and Affiliations”) the seminary has benefited from several Lilly Endowment funded initiatives which have encouraged significant forms of collaboration. Beginning in 2020, the seminary was a founding collaborator with the Episcopal Diocese of New York in “Episcopal Futures”, a \$1m “Thriving Congregations” initiative project funded by the Lilly Endowment. “Episcopal Futures” is a congregationally based approach to missional revitalization guided by the Way of Love curriculum.

In early 2021, while the Seminary was in conversations about collaboration with Virginia Theological Seminary, both schools successfully secured Phase 1 funding from the Lilly Endowment’s “Pathways for Tomorrow” initiative which will be used to catalyze ongoing efforts toward non-competitive and strategic collaboration between the two historic Seminaries. This relationship builds upon a long history of shared work which includes the TryTank, coordinated continuing education events and seminars, and trial plans for a limited number of shared courses in academic year 2021/22.

At the Seminary’s 199th commencement on May 19, 2021, we celebrated the conclusion of The Very Rev. Kurt Dunkle’s 8-year tenure as Dean and President. His leadership played an important role in providing institutional stability, laying a strong foundation from which the next chapter of the Seminary’s history can be written. The Very Rev. Dr. Michael W. DeLashmutt, the Seminary’s Vice President and Dean for Academic Affairs and Associate Professor of Sacred Theology, was called by the board of trustees to serve as Acting Dean and President for the next two years.

We begin this triennium with clarity of vision to be a seminary for the whole people of God, energized by our Anglican, Benedictine, urban and contextual ethos, and equipped to faithfully live into our mission to educate and form leaders for the Church in a changing world.

The Rt. Rev. Robert Wright
Bishop of Atlanta and Chairman of the Board of Trustees

The Very Rev. Dr. Michael W. DeLashmutt
Acting Dean and President