



## Board Notes

March, 2019

### **Higher Learning Commission Grants Full Accreditation to Saint Paul School of Theology**

Congratulations to all who participated in the two-year effort to address the concerns of our primary accrediting agency, the Higher Learning Commission. In mid-March, the HLC informed us that the institution has been removed from probationary status. You can read more about the decision and standards of the HLC at [spst.edu/accreditation/](http://spst.edu/accreditation/). The institution will continue to work with the HLC on matters related to learning assessment and planning necessary for reversing declining enrollment. Two important outcomes resulted from this process. First, the institution significantly improved its operational and governance practices and, second, the board and leadership team can now focus more on the future of the institution.

### **Board Development - Wise Stewards Initiative: Governance as an Agent for Change**

Susan Lindahl, Ph.D.

Trustee

As an important step in board development, a group from Saint Paul recently attended a day and a half workshop in Vancouver, Washington courtesy of a grant from M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust. Participants included Trustees Parmely, Sample and Lindahl and President Blair. Preliminary work included preparation of a profile of the Saint Paul board (available in the trustees Moodle folder), the Wise Stewards Guide (available on the In Trust Center for Theological Schools website), and assigned reading of the book *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Unchartered Territory* by Dr. Tod Bolsinger. The thirteen-hour first day of the seminar began with a presentation by author Bolsinger, who serves as Vice President and Chief of Leadership Formation at Fuller Theological Seminary. He chartered the course for our learning as each seminary's president and trustees

shared a table with their counterparts from another free-standing seminary. We discovered that we are much more alike than different in meeting the missions of our institutions. A recording of the seminar sessions will be available soon for more in-depth discovery.

Other topics and speakers included:

- **Sharing Institutional Plans** from each of the ten seminaries: B. H. Carrol Theological Institute, Bexley Seabury Seminary Federation, Logos Theological Seminary, Memphis Theological Seminary, Nazarene Theological Seminary, Saint Paul School of Theology, The Seattle School of Theology and Psychology, United Theological Seminary, Western Seminary and Winebrenner Theological Seminary
- **Breakout Sessions:**
  - o Re-working Bylaws
  - o Fundraising
  - o Succession Planning and Presidential Search
  - o Institutional Finances
- **Fear, Anxiety, and Angst: Governing in Uncertain Times** by Dr. Rod Wilson, who also served as a faculty coach for the Wise Stewards Initiative
- **Ted Talks** on:
  - o "Where Good Ideas Come From"
  - o "5 Ways to Lead in an Era of Constant Change"
  - o "The Danger of a Single Story"
- **Change Your School's Story, Change its Future** presented by President Molly Marshall of Central Baptist Theological Seminary
- **Governance That Works for Change** presented by President Gordon Smith of Ambrose University and Seminary

There were numerous opportunities to interface with the other nine seminaries and hear their stories and challenges. We heard many of the same uncertainties about enrollment and funding that we face. We also learned about institutional growth and how some seminaries are expanding opportunities to meet their mission. The boundaries between appropriate board leadership and governance versus management was a common thread for discussion throughout the presentations and informal gatherings.

In summary, a central theme for the fast-paced seminar was introduced by Dr. Amy Kardash when she met with the Saint Paul School of Theology Board during its Fall, 2018 meeting. Amy underscored the four pillars of good board governance:

- mutual accountability,
- communication about things that matter,
- transparency,
- and trust.

Looking back at our two board self-surveys, including the Fall, 2018 survey (see November 2018 *Board Notes*), we are strengthened by our participation in this opportunity facilitated by In Trust. Our next steps will include the exploration of shared governance as a means of moving forward in partnership for the future of Saint Paul, its mission, and its students.

### **Presidential Profile Completed**

We are indebted to those who participated in the survey or group discussions that aided the board in compiling a presidential profile, an essential component of presidential succession planning. You may obtain a copy of the profile by contacting Trustee Glenn Grove, Chair of the Governance Committee.

### **May Board Meeting**

The Board of Trustees will meet on the campus of Oklahoma City University for its spring board meeting on May 1-2. The agenda includes an afternoon devoted to unpacking the idea that Saint Paul is "One Seminary - Two Locations," which will be facilitated by Mr. Bill Riley. We will also enjoy a banquet hosted by Bishop Jimmy Nunn of the Oklahoma Conference and a breakfast conversation with President Martha Burger of OCU. If you are new to the board, plan to participate in new member training on Wednesday morning. Details will follow. If you need hotel reservations, please contact Leanna Walkowiak in the president's office.

### **A Conversation with Rev. Dr. Mark Holland**

On March 29, the Board hosted a meeting with Rev. Dr. Mark Holland (D.Min. Saint Paul School of Theology) about the implications of the recent UMC General Conference held in St. Louis. Dr. Holland stressed the need to focus on grace as a

way of remaining engaged during these divisive times. In the words of President Blair:

"Saint Paul has long had in place a commitment of non-discrimination towards LGBTQ persons. Saint Paul School of Theology welcomes ALL qualified persons seeking theological education. We are dedicated to providing the best theological education to our current and future students as they fulfill their desire to learn and experience the unconditional love of Jesus Christ within the community of Saint Paul School of Theology. Our doors are open, and we look forward to you joining us!"